

EMPLOYEE HANDOUT

Safely Using a Snow Shovel

The goal of this Safety Talk is to reduce the number of worker injury incidents while removing snow with a shovel. During the winter season, removing snow can be a regular occurrence. Due to the strenuous nature of the work the potential for musculoskeletal injury is high if proper technique is not used. Please consider the following when removing snow with a shovel.

Safety Tips

Ensure you are Fit for Duty. Maintain your **health and wellness** at all times. Come to work **well rested, hydrated** and **fed**. Staying physically **fit for the job, warming up** your muscles prior to work, and taking a **short break** when you become fatigued will go a long way towards preventing strains.

Dress in appropriate layers for the temperatures and conditions. It is also important to cover your head, use gloves and ensure your feet stay warm and dry. Avoid falls by wearing boots that have slip-resistant soles or by using **boot grips** (eg Yak Trax) to improve traction.

Pace yourself and take breaks every 15 minutes or so. Stand up straight, walk around, and **drink water** to avoid dehydration. Listen to your body. Pay attention to your body's signals, such as pains, shortness of breath, and chest discomfort.

Use a light-weight shovel in good working order. Select a **shovel that fits you** – with the blade on the ground, the handle should come to your chest.

The right shovel, for the right type of surface can make the job easier on your arms and back. Test the shovel out, you may need a different size or shape depending on the type and depth of snow.

Do not shovel on a roof or platform until you have received training and are authorized by your supervisor to do so. Use a pull shovel if possible and if you must shovel at height, use **fall restraint or fall arrest equipment**.

Shovel early and often. Newly fallen snow is lighter than heavily-packed or partially-melted snow. For deeper snow, shovel an inch or two off the top each time.

Ensure the **area is safe to work in**, be aware of your environment and surroundings. Check for **overhead hazards** e.g. snow or ice falling from a deck or roof. Ensure you aren't going to accidentally hit someone with snow or your shovel and that the lighting levels are adequate. In some cases, the area may need to be roped off. Be aware of moving machines (including ski lifts).

Use the **proper shoveling technique**.

- **Push** the snow instead of lifting it, and be sure not to overload the shovel.
- If you have to lift, **squat** with your legs apart, bend your knees and lift with your legs (not your back!) while keeping your core engaged. Do not twist while shoveling, turn your feet instead.
- Keep the shovel close to your body and space your hands on the shovel to increase leverage. Do not throw the snow over your shoulder or to the side.

Remember, each shovel full of snow can weigh roughly 20lbs (9 kg)!

Common Injuries

- Sprains and strains to the back.
- Shoulder and hand injuries.
- Over-exertion.

Additional Resources

- Your ski area policy and procedures.
- Ski Safety Talk: Clearing Snow from Roofs.
- Ski Safety Talk: Using a Snow Blower.
- [CCOHS: Shoveling Snow](#).
- More Ski Area Safety Resources: go2hr.ca/skisafety