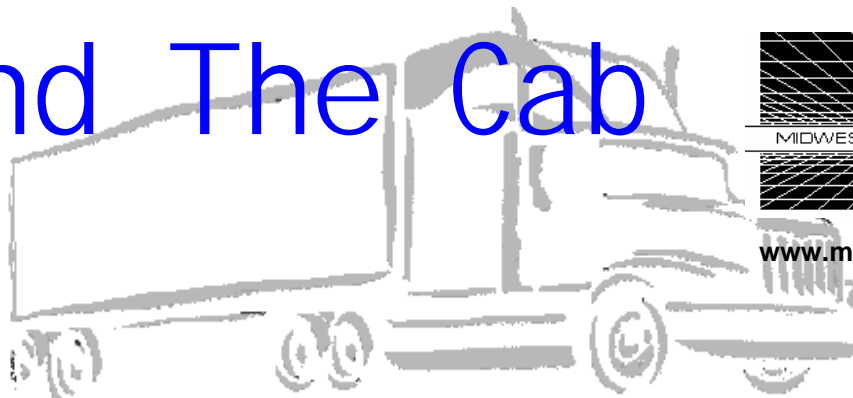


# Beyond The Cab

The only safety management newsletter dedicated exclusively to addressing injury prevention and workers' compensation cost control for trucking companies.



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## Winter Non-Driving Safety

Particularly with the unseasonably mild weather that the majority of the country has seen so far this season, it's hard to believe that Christmas is just a few weeks away. For many trucking companies the time is quickly approaching when the biggest company-wide gathering of the year will take place. Many trucking companies seize that opportunity to distribute year-end safety bonuses and awards. Many more use that rare gathering of drivers to conduct a company-wide safety meeting.

For companies that conduct a company-wide safety meeting during the Christmas season, the topic presented to drivers is generally focused on winter driving safety.

Of course that topic is selected year after year for good reason. Winter driving presents some unique challenges that are not present during the other three seasons. Reminding drivers how to properly respond to winter driving hazards is a

good management practice. It helps to ensure that all drivers have some common knowledge of winter driving safety, and helps to keep the desired countermeasures top-of-mind.

With that in mind, this issue of "*Beyond the Cab*" is not suggesting that discussion of winter driving safety be abandoned, or even diminished. However, "winter safety" for drivers is not limited to "winter driving safety." Winter weather, in other words, brings with it hazards that extend beyond the cab. In fact, many trucking companies experience a spike in non-driving workers'

compensation claims during the winter months, as a direct result of winter hazards.

Ice is perhaps the most significant culprit. For obvious reasons, snow and ice increase the likelihood for slips and falls. Additionally, tripping is more likely, as holes and other hazards can be obscured from view by snow. To make things even more frustrating, many winter weather-related slip/fall injuries in the trucking industry occur at a shippers' facility, truck stop or other location at which you (the employer) have no control over snow and ice removal. Hence the most effective countermeasures rest in mentally preparing drivers to expect and properly respond to the reality that they will encounter ice and snow.



Encourage drivers to wear ankle-high work boots with hard rubber soles, as these provide some slip-resistance and offer protection against ankle injuries. Convince drivers to treat all dock steps as potentially having a thin layer of ice and to always use the handrail during winter months.

Although your drivers are (more often than not) away from your company facility, don't let your own parking lot and sidewalks become hazards. Before the first snowflake falls or the first puddle freezes-over, define responsibilities for keeping your walking surfaces free from snow and ice and ensure that adequate supplies are on-hand now. Plan ahead, filling potholes now will prevent the pooling of water that could otherwise turn into an ice hazard.

Ice is not only a hazard when it is on parking lots and sidewalks. For drivers, ice is a very real hazard when it forms on the

truck itself. While driving, ice can easily form on the running boards or steps of the cab, creating a very serious hazard for an unsuspecting driver. For this reason, upon exiting the cab, drivers should be encouraged to get into the habit of running their foot across the top running board while still seated, just to feel if it is slick.

Other non-driving hazards that are deserved of attention this time of year include cleaning the windshield of accumulated ice and road slush without creating a slip/fall hazard; securing flatbed loads and climbing on to tanker trailers when slippery conditions may exist; and entering van trailers when the ICC bumper maybe ice-covered.

The effect of the outdoor temperature on the body is another winter hazard for drivers. Drivers should be aware that getting in and out of their truck and going in and out of shipper facilities means that the body is repeatedly going from warm to cold temperatures, which can fatigue the body. Additionally the cold outdoor temperature causes muscles to become tense and more prone to strains. This means that drivers are more prone to injury when pulling on the fifth-wheel release or attempting to slide tandems. Now factor in the fact that the cold weather itself can make both of these tasks more difficult. What you have is a recipe for injury. For these reasons, during cold weather it is particularly important for drivers to warm-up and stretch. And employers should not assume that drivers know how to warm-up and stretch properly.

You still have time before that year-end safety meeting to revise the content and include non-driving winter safety. If you prevent one workers' compensation claim as a result, it will have paid off.