



Developing a Winter Safety Watch Team

A Winter Safety Watch Team can be instrumental in minimizing the chance for slips and falls during hazardous winter weather. The following are key steps for establishing an effective watch team:

- Solicit employees who are capable of conducting inspections of outdoor areas and entrances into the building.
- If you have multiple locations, assign a Winter Safety Watch Team for each building. Hold regular meetings to discuss findings and solutions.
- Map out an inspection and time strategy to safely and efficiently perform the surveys. Inspections should take no more than 10 to 15 minutes. Inspections should include not only the condition of the key areas, but also if there is adequate lighting and sand/salt available if needed. Key times to complete the inspection would include prior to shift changes, prior to highest traffic patterns for employees, and during highest traffic patterns for clients.

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Utilize UH tools

United Heartland's annual WalkSafe campaign includes regular communications about how to reduce slip and fall exposures. Each phase will have several useful resources and materials for you to use. We encourage your organization to consider how this information can best be utilized and distributed to your teams. At any time during the campaign, we encourage you to visit UnitedHeartland.com or contact your UH Loss Control representative for additional information.

- Determine the parameters of responsibility for the Winter Safety Watch Team. Clarify what the team can and cannot perform. For example, the team can use walk-behind sand or salt spreaders, but not engage in shoveling or snow removal, unless so qualified. A call to your snowplowing contractor may be the first order of business. Clearly, document this information with the inspection form.
- Volunteers should be equipped with over-clothing that repels moisture. They should wear brightly colored clothing, or vest, and use a quality flashlight to aid in visibility. Consider providing water repellent over-clothing complete with your company logo and identification as a "Winter Safety Watch Team" member. Specific training on potential hazards should be conducted to ensure their safety. Familiarity with their inspection patterns and potential hazards should be rehearsed in the fall before actual inspections occur.
- Volunteers should have a plan to address hazards. This may include snow removal, calling the contracted snow removal company, or contacting maintenance if lighting has failed or there is limited salt available in designated areas.
- Documentation of inspections via a checklist should be completed and kept on file. These should be periodically reviewed to determine if there are trends. The checklists can be utilized to determine "problem" areas that may require additional attention.
- Promote the WalkSafe campaign through the Winter Safety Watch Team. Assign additional responsibilities to the team, for example, change out winter posters, ensure salt is available.
- Recognize the Winter Safety Watch Team at the end of the season for their efforts and evaluate the team's effectiveness to improve next year's winter weather campaigns.

