



Safety Matters

Environmental Health & Safety

No. 12

Walking on Ice



We have experienced our first (but likely not last) ice event of the year. The Stillwater campus escaped the severe effects of the ice storm. And due to the diligence of Physical Plant workers, our streets and sidewalks were relatively easy to negotiate. However, we did not escape ice-related injuries. Since ice is often a fact of life in winter, it is always best to re-learn what we have forgotten during those lazy, hazy days of summer.

Getting around campus in icy conditions calls for planning, caution, and a little common sense. On icy days, always leave yourself plenty of travel time so you won't be in a hurry. Also, try to avoid wearing shoes that have plastic or leather soles. When walking on steps always use the handrail and make sure each foot is planted firmly on each step before taking another step. Before you step off the curb, make sure all oncoming cars and trucks have come to a complete stop.

When walking on an icy or snow-covered walkway, take short steps and walk at a slower pace so you can react quickly to a change in traction. Bending your knees a little and taking slower and shorter steps increases traction and can greatly reduce your chances of falling. It also helps to stop occasionally to break momentum. When entering a building, take notice that floors and stairs may be wet and slippery—walk carefully.

Watch out for "black ice" that may form on cleared sidewalks. Dew, fog or water vapor can freeze on cold surfaces and form an extra-thin, nearly invisible layer of ice. It often shows up early in the morning or in areas that are shaded from the sun. Also watch out for ice hanging from eaves, sloping roofs, and trees—it can fall quickly and silently.

That being said, ice can be treacherous. Just take your time, wear shoes with non-skid soles, take small steps, and try to keep your balance. Remember—it's only 3 months until Spring!

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