



Short Safety Subject

Short Safety Subjects are provided by the Public Safety Business Center, Fort Bragg, NC. Our intent is to provide safety topics for the purpose of increasing safety awareness and improving safety performance. Additional Short Safety Subjects are available on the PSBC Business Management Web Site at:

www.bragg.army.mil/psbc-bm/PubsAndForms/ShortSafetySubjects.htm

Snow Removal



As I opened the front door to go to work, a pile of snow fell back inside and covered my feet. Sound familiar? For many of us who live in a cold climate, snow removal is reality. How we deal with it may be the difference between a serious injury and an inconvenience.

For those who have a snow blower, the job is easier but not without hazard. The first thing to think about is what was left on the driveway before you start the machine. Rocks, toys and other odds and ends are now frozen projectiles capable of breaking windows or easily putting out an eye. Always aim the discharge chute away from property and people. Never allow small children in or around the area to be blown. Occasionally the impellers will pick up something like twine or a plastic bag and jam. Never try to clear a machine while it is running. Take the time to turn it off before you work on it.

Remember when playing in the snow was fun and helping dad shovel the driveway was a blast? For many of us, that is how we still get the job done, and it can be a pain in the back!

Many suppliers now offer an ergonomic snow shovel. They are a good idea and they work. The principle is to offset the handle, so you do not have to bend over to use it. Attaching a handle to the shovel where your lower hand grips the shovel will accomplish the same purpose. The idea is to remain as erect as possible.

The same theories used to prevent back injury while shoveling dirt apply to snow, but because snow is light we do not always use them. Scoop in a forward motion, move your feet as close as possible, lift and toss without twisting. Many people toss snow to one side or another and this twisting motion takes its toll on the back.

Another thing to consider is stretching. Many of us start the day having to shovel to get to work. Taking the time to stretch those muscles a little bit will help prevent a sore back. The next thing to consider is fatigue. Take a break every so often and relax. This will allow your body time to recuperate from exertion and may prevent a serious injury. Last but not least, you may want to consider a back support.

Working in a cold climate has additional hazards that may not be so obvious. Dehydration is a serious consideration. Breathing cold dry air robs moisture from your body every time you take a breath. If you become dehydrated, you are more susceptible to frost bite and hypothermia. Drink plenty of water. Avoid working up a sweat. Damp or moist clothing will increase your body's heat loss rate and again make you more susceptible to cold weather injury. If you are starting to sweat, take a break.