

School Safety and Emergency Management

Monthly Minute: Slips, Trips and Falls

December 2023

Monthly Minute is a newsletter providing insight and tips on potential threats and hazards brought to you by your regional school emergency management professionals in partnership with the Oregon Department of Education.



Get ready to walk like a penguin! The days are shorter, the nights are longer, and the temperatures are colder. Winter weather effects can range from a slight inconvenience to major regional disruptions. The minute a snowflake falls, the phones start ringing at schools asking about a snow day, yet normal life continues on many of those days. On days when we continue as scheduled, students and staff will show up on cold mornings walking along slippery sidewalks—a potential injury risk due to slips, trips or falls.

Thankfully, schools can prepare ahead of time to prevent and mitigate the impacts of winter weather on daily life. First and foremost is the

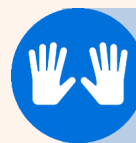
need to know what your local and regional hazards are so you can prepare for them. Winter weather can look very different depending on where you are in the state. However, all areas will likely encounter icy conditions at some point during the winter. Sign up for your local weather alerts, connect with your local emergency responders, and have a plan in place to get the word out on changing conditions (**see last month's newsletter** on how to do that!).

When the roads aren't that bad, and the weather report doesn't look so bleak, the busses can run on time and classes are held on time. But what kind of dangers do we encounter once they get there? Icy sidewalks and falling ice will likely top that list. Make sure you remind your students and staff to take it easy when walking around outside in colder temperatures. Adopt a wider stance and take deliberate steps when walking around in icy conditions. And no running! Slips, trips and falls account for an inordinate number of injuries every year—we certainly don't want to send a child home for a preventable injury.

On the following page are some additional things to consider before, during, and after winter weather events to help mitigate the impacts to the school community. *(continued on next page)*

This Month... Conduct a Secure Drill this month. Review best practices for traveling in icy conditions. Also, conduct a table top exercise with staff on a transition from Secure! to reunification.

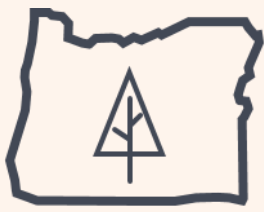
Up Next... January's Monthly Minute will cover Cascadia awareness: what Oregon can expect when the big one hits. Review local and regional risks and hazards.



Conduct a Secure Drill in December.



Conduct an earthquake drill.



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A Secure! Drill is used any time there is an outside threat or hazard that we want to protect our students from. This could be a major accident on a nearby roadway or police activity in the surrounding neighborhood. Any situation in which you do not want people coming in or out due to some external threat or hazard is a situation in which you should enact a Secure Drill. Visit [ILoveUGuys.org](https://www.ILoveUGuys.org) to learn more about this and other emergency drills.



Secure Drill: Get inside. Lock outside doors.

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Additional considerations:

- Stock and use traction and de-icing agents in parking lots, on walkways, stairs, and ramps.
- Add weather stripping to walkways and stairs before the weather gets bad.
- Ensure emergency evacuation and medical access routes are kept clear of snow and ice.
- Train staff and students on the signs of frostbite and hypothermia.
- Educate the school community to walk like a penguin when things are icy or slushy, **check out this animated video for just how to do it.**
- Plan for staff and students with access and functional needs, disabilities, and additional medical needs. Ensure you have extra

medications on hand in the case of a shelter in place due to weather.

- Make sure pathways are clear of overhanging branches which can become heavy with ice and icicles posing a danger to people walking below.
- Ensure families are signed up for mass notification messages in the case of delayed starts, early closures, and school day cancellations.
- Have extra food, water, and blankets on hand in case staff and students need to shelter in place due to winter weather impacts.
- Encourage everyone in the school community to have a personal winter weather safety plan in place at home!

Contact Information

Scan the QR code below or [click this link](#) to connect with a regional school emergency management professional for help on this or any other school emergency topic.



Join us on the **2nd Wednesday of every month at 8:30am** to get assistance with this or other emergency preparedness topics: [ZOOM LINK!](#)

Additional Resources

For winter weather considerations and resources visit:

<https://www.ready.gov/winter-weather>

[Center for Science Education](#) has some winter weather teaching resources.

Oregon Emergency Management [local contacts list](#).