

Winter Safety Grant 2015

By: Shawn Bubb, MSGIA Director of Insurance Services

Eager to encourage schools to prevent slips, trips, and falls on ice and snow this winter, the MSGIA is once again offering 15 safety grants to those members who provide us with their detailed plans for winter preparation. To be eligible for receiving one of these \$1,000 grants, your proposal will need to address in full the following questions:

- 1) What communication tools will you employ to convey to your employees the importance of wearing the proper footwear in the winter when coming and going to school?
- 2) When will you have a planning meeting with your maintenance staff to map out which walk ways get cleared first, second, third and so on?
- 3) Will you be using ice melt, sand, gravel, or some combination for ice control?
- 4) Do staff working outside have access to Yak Trak like devices?
- 5) Do entryways have ice/sand buckets that staff can spread on slick spots when they see them?
- 6) Do entryways have walk-off mats to absorb snow and water from shoes and boots?
- 7) In addition to using hand shovels and brooms, do you plan to use snow blowers and/or tractors with blades or brushes to clear snow?
- 8) What is your plan for clearing parking lots where employees park?

Just send me an email with the gist of your school's simple plans in these 8 areas; if you provide a complete response, you will be entered in the drawing for one of the \$1,000 safety grants. Emails can be sent to insuranceservices@mtsba.org

A couple important topics to keep at the top of your safety checklist:

- 1) Employee communications
- 2) Use of walk-off mats
- 3) Use of personal traction devices

Employee communications – Staff members need to do their part to ensure the safety of themselves and the students. However, you can't be sure they know their part unless you provide proper and timely training. To be sure, this training doesn't always need to be in a formal classroom setting; it can happen at staff meetings or through email reminders, etc. If you want information to provide to your staff, or if you want someone to provide training, please contact your Risk Management Associate, and s/he will be happy to assist.

Walk-Off Mats – Help get mud, dirt, and moisture off of shoes. Keeping the trail of snow and water from entering the hallways is an important first step toward winter injury prevention. The mats are something that should be considered even if your entry is carpeted – they will save wear and tear on the carpet.

Personal traction devices – Many of the injuries we see each winter occur between the employees' car and the building in which they work. For this reason, we strongly recommend the use of shoe traction

devices. I've used a Yak Trax type device for the last several winters to walk from the parking lot to our building, and I'm a believer. Whether the Yak Trax are issued to staff or you encourage their use, the bottom line is that they work. It's a small investment at \$15-\$30/pair when compared to the cost of one slip fall injury. Staff needs to be reminded to use them and to take them off when they come inside. Districts can help by providing an area for them to remove the personal traction device from their shoes as well. A chair and a table work best. This makes it so people can set down what they are carrying before removing the Yak Trax.

Winter is a big driver of school district work-place losses, and we encourage your district to work hard this winter to reduce injuries. We have seen in the past a clear correlation between thoughtful prevention and hoped-for outcomes. Last year, for instance, our members recorded 50% of the total annual claims during the November-to-March window. Without question, your employees are worth the effort, and the MSGIA is here to help you achieve the goal of a 15% reduction in slips, trips, and falls during this coming winter cycle.

Submissions will be accepted through November 13, 2015, and winners of the winter safety grants will be announced at the MTSBA Law and Technology Symposium on November 17th!

I look forward to hearing from each of our members on the winter preparation plans.