# Safety Talk

FEBRUARY 2025

## Downed Electrical Lines Safety

Electrical hazards multiply for workers involved in cleanup and recovery efforts following major disasters and weather emergencies. Life-threatening danger exists around downed and low-hanging electrical wires which may still be energized following a storm.

**Safety First:** Always consider electrical equipment and powerlines to be energized. If you notice downed wires or damaged electrical equipment, contact appropriate utility authority. Power does not always turn off when a line falls into a tree or onto the ground. Reloaders automatically try to reset circuits to restore power when it is interrupted. Even if electric lines are not sparking or humming, fallen electric lines can electrocute you if you touch them or the ground nearby.

**Energy:** Downed wires can energize other nearby objects, such as fences, pipes, bushes and trees, buildings, and telephone/ CATV/ fiber optic cables. Anything in contact with the lines may be energized.

**Backfeed:** Backfeeding is a hazardous condition created when temporary sources of electricity (such as a generator) are connected to the damaged permanent system. Electricity can flow from inside a structure out to the power lines through connected lines and equipment. Portable generators should only be used as standalone sources of power unless connected to a building's electrical system through a properly installed main breaker bypass to prevent electricity from flowing out of the building and into downed power lines.

**Rules to Live By:**

- Never assume that a downed power line is safe simply because it is not sparking or humming.
- Do not assume that any wire is a harmless telephone, or fiber -optic cable, It may carry current.
- Treat everything electrical as energized until tested by the local utility authority.
- Electricity can spread outward through the ground from the point of contact. As you move away from the center, large differences in voltages can be created.
- Never drive over downed power lines. Rubber tires do not provide insulation against electricity.
- If your vehicle contacts an energized line keep calm, don't get out unless the vehicle is on fire.
- If you must exit any equipment or vehicle because of fire or other safety reasons, try to jump completely clear, making sure that you do not touch the vehicle and the ground at the same time. Land with both feet together and shuffle away in small steps to minimize the path of electric current and avoid electrical shock.

## Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a colorless, odorless, toxic gas which interferes with the oxygen-carrying capacity of blood. CO is non-irritating and can overcome you without warning. Many people die from CO poisoning, usually while using gasoline powered tools and generators in buildings or semi-enclosed spaces without adequate ventilation


**Effects of Carbon Monoxide Poisoning:**

Severe carbon monoxide poisoning causes neurological damage, illness, coma and death

**Symptoms of CO exposure:**

Symptoms include Headaches, Dizziness, Drowsiness, Nausea, and Tightness across the chest.

**Some Sources of Exposure:**

- Portable generators/generators in buildings.
- Gasoline and Diesel motor vehicles
- Gasoline Powered tools and equipment
- Kerosene Space Heaters
- LP Gas appliances
- Incomplete Combustion of Fossil Fuel

**Preventing CO Exposure:**

When servicing motor vehicles inside, ensure proper ventilation is maintained by venting CO outside. Never use a generator indoors or in enclosed spaces such as garages, crawl spaces and basements. Opening windows and doors in an enclosed space may prevent CO buildup. Do not use a generator outdoors if placed near doors, windows or vents which could allow CO to enter and build up in occupied spaces. When using space heaters and stoves ensure that they are in good working order. Consider using tools powered by electricity or compressed air, if available.

Install Carbon Monoxide detectors inside your buildings where CO may be present to alert if exposures are present.

**If you experience signs or symptoms of CO poisoning get fresh air and seek immediate medical attention.**

# AVOID WINTER SLIPS/FALLS

Winter months present additional hazards that are typically not factors for employees during warmer weather-specifically, slip and fall concerns. With snow and ice covered conditions, you run the risk of taking major falls, which can lead to serious injuries. In this article, you will find methods that will help you reduce the potential for serious injuries during the winter months.

**Prevention**

Educating your employees and being proactive is essential in preventing winter weather-related injuries. Consider the following recommendations to prevent slip and fall injuries during the winter months:

- Wear the proper footwear that provides traction on snow and ice. Footwear should be made of anti-slip material. Avoid plastic and leather-soled shoes or boots. Consider utilizing ice/snow traction cleats for your shoes and boots.
- Exercise caution when entering and exiting vehicles. Use a three-point stance when getting in and out of your vehicle. Use the vehicle for balance and support.
- Try to walk in only designated areas that are safe for foot traffic. If you notice that a walkway is covered in ice, walk on the grass next to the sidewalk, which will have more traction.
- Avoid inclines that are typically difficult to walk up or down as they may be more treacherous in winter conditions.
- Take small steps to maintain your center of balance, walk slowly and never run. When possible, walk with your hands free to maintain your balance.
- Use handrails, walls or anything stationary to assist in steadying your feet.
- Remove debris, water and ice from all working walkways.
- Dry your shoes or boots on floor mats when entering a building.
- Report slip and fall hazards immediately to your supervisor.

**Be Proactive**

- Implement snow and salt removal procedures prior to employees coming to work.
- Good ice melt choices for concrete are Calcium Chloride and Magnesium Chloride. While Potassium Chloride is good for the environment it damages the concrete and typically costs 3-5 times more.
- Another good de-icer is CMA-or Calcium Magnesium Acetate. CMA does not wash away as easily as the other de-icers and has a lower environmental impact.
- Alternatives to de-icers include cat litter, sand, gravel, wood chips and straw.

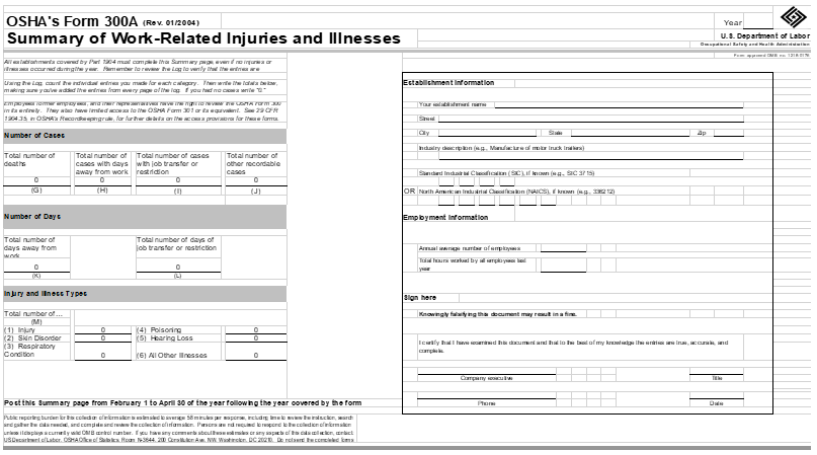
**If You Begin to Slip...**

- Try to relax your body when you start to feel your legs give way.
- If you are carrying a load, throw it off to the side. This will free your arms to help break your fall.

# OSHA RECORDKEEPING AND REPORTING

**Your 2024 OSHA 300A form, which details your Summary of Work-Related Injuries and Illness will need to be completed and posted by 2/1/25!**

- All employers must post their OSHA 300A Summary form annually.
- Employers must post the OSHA 300A Summary form in an area common to employees for their viewing such as a break room.
- The 2024 OSHA 300A Summary form should be posted by 2/1/25 and remain posted until 4/30/25.
- After April 30th of each year, the OSHA 300, 300A and 301 Logs (equivalent accident reporting forms) must be retained for 5 years.
- If there were no injuries or accidents recorded in 2024, you must still post the 2024 OSHA 300A Summary form and place zeros (0) in the designated boxes.



OSHA's Form 300A (Rev. 01/2004)

Summary of Work-Related Injuries and Illnesses

Year

U.S. Department of Labor

Establishment information

Employment information

Number of Cases

Number of Days

Injury and Illness Types

Post this Summary page from February 1 to April 30 of the year following the year covered by the form

## FEBRUARY 2025 QUIZ

## TRUE or FALSE

1. The 2024 OSHA 300A Summary form must be posted in an area common to employees.
**True or False**

2. If you begin to slip while walking, relax your body as soon as you start to feel your legs give way.
**True or False**

3. Carbon Monoxide (CO) can easily be detected due to the sharp aroma associated with the visible gas.
**True or False**

4. Carbon Monoxide (CO) gas occurs from the incomplete combustion .
**True or False**

5. Consider all downed powerlines to be energized even if there are no obvious indicators such as arcing, flashes, humming, or smoke.
**True or False**

**Answers**

1. True 2. True 3. False 4. True 5. True