



# ARCHDIOCESE OF INDIANAPOLIS

## Safety and Loss Control News

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Prepared by Gallagher Bassett Services, Inc.

## Extreme Cold Weather Precautions

*The following cold weather safety reminders are helpful for the subzero temperatures many of us experience during the winter months. Consider using these tips both at work and at home.*

### Cold Weather Safety Precautions

- **Review your Parish's emergency plans.** There are many types of emergencies that can occur due to extremely cold weather. Power outages, furnace failure and fire are a few examples. Prior to a cold weather event, review and update contact information in your parish's emergency messaging system or calling tree.
- **Call your supervisor or follow your emergency messaging system** for instructions about building closures and work activity.
- **Make Sure Fire and Carbon Monoxide (CO) detection systems are working.** These devices will give you the earliest possible warning that something is wrong so that everyone can escape safely.
- **Keep thermostats** set at the lowest comfortable temperature as furnaces may struggle to keep the building warm. Wear warm clothes and do not use an alternate heat source.
- **Space Heaters.** Fires caused from the use of space heaters are very common during spells of cold, frigid temperatures. In fact, during a recent five year period, one in every seven space heater fires has caused a fire-related death. Do not use space heaters at your church, school or parish. If a furnace failure occurs, follow your parish's emergency procedures.
- **Prevent Carbon Monoxide Poisoning.** Carbon monoxide poisoning is another huge risk during extremely cold weather situations. The use of propane or charcoal grills or generators inside a building or garage – even with the door open – poses a serious risk of CO poisoning. In addition, never use a gas oven to generate heat.
- **Generator Safety.** Use generators outdoors and away from windows, doors and vents. Point the exhaust away from the building. Do not use a generator unless you have been trained to do so. Always be sure to test a generator prior to using it in an emergency situation or power outage.
- **Gasoline** should be stored outside the building in small quantities in approved containers. Always remember to allow equipment to cool before refueling to prevent vapors from igniting.
- **Clear Away Snow from Furnace and Dryer Vents.** Keep outside furnace, hot water and dryer vents clear of drifting snow to prevent flue gases from backing up into the building and creating a carbon monoxide hazard.
- **Use Flashlights and Battery-Operated Candles.** In most buildings, emergency lighting systems will activate in the event of a power outage. Flashlights and battery-operated candles can also be used for safety. Do not use flame burning candles.
- **Prevent Frozen Pipes.** If a building is unoccupied, do not turn the heat all the way off. Also, if there is a possibility of a pipe freezing, let water drip from the pipe. This may help prevent the pipes from freezing. Open cupboards under sinks to let heat circulate around the pipes as well.

### Electronics Safety

- Do not leave electronic equipment in vehicles. Damage may occur.
- Do not use a cold car cell phone battery charger. Let it warm up first.

### Travel Precautions

- Dress for the weather. Wear a hat, gloves, boots, scarves, and a heavy jacket.
- If you must travel and weather is extreme, inform a supervisor (or friend or relative if you are not on duty) of your

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**Prior to a cold weather event, review and update contact information in your parish's emergency messaging system or calling tree.**

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# Proper Lifting and Ergonomics

Sarah, the parish office manager, had nearly tripped several times over a box of copy paper someone had left on the floor in the supply room. To prevent her coworkers from becoming injured, she decided to pick the box up, intending to place it up on a nearby counter top. She bent over, lifted the box, and began moving it to the counter. As she turned to place the box on the counter, she felt a pop followed by extreme pain in her lower back. She let out a scream and fell to her knees.

Fortunately, the pastor was nearby and came to her aid. Sarah could not move. The paramedics were called and Sarah was taken to the emergency room. The injury resulted in Sarah being unable to work for six weeks while she recovered.

Strains and injuries are not limited to those who do heavy labor. Hundreds if not thousands of injuries happen in parishes across the country every day. Many of these injuries are similar to Sarah's; they happen quickly and are immediately noticeable. Others, however, happen over a period of time. What we do know is that these injuries can cost both the parish and individuals time and money. Occasionally, these injuries are unavoidable, but most can be prevented. The need for proactive training cannot be overstated.

## Lifting

Lifting injuries are painful and costly, but are also preventable. A quick search on the internet will provide hundreds of web sites and information about how to lift properly. Though there may be some slight variations, most experts agree on the following proper lifting techniques:

1. **Focus on the task: test, plan, path.**
2. **Move in close to the load.**
3. **Bend at your knees—not at your waist.**
4. **Tense your stomach muscles, keep your back straight, and avoid unnecessary twisting.**
5. **Hold the load close to your body.**
6. **Grip the load firmly using your palms.**
7. **Gently lift the material using the strength of your legs and not your back.**
8. **As you lift, control the speed and force of the lift.**
9. **Turn with your feet and don't twist your body.**
10. **If the material weighs more than 40-45 pounds, do not lift it. Use a mechanical aid such as a dolly or "team lift" with someone who is of equal strength.**

Safe lifting practices often include discussion on the topic of back belts. The pros and cons of back belts continue to be a widely debated topic among safety professionals. Many have concluded that back supports are most effective when used with an overall back injury prevention program. It is important to remember that back supports will not prevent back injuries if proper lifting techniques are not used and may give the user a false sense of security. However, when used correctly, back belts provide support to the lower back and help to prevent bending at the waist when lifting an object.

Ensuring that safe lifting practices are used in the parish setting can be accomplished by training employees and volunteers, and helping them know their physical limitations. Not only should proper lifting guidelines be posted, but employees and volunteers should be required to follow them. Oftentimes, a



person who is either out of shape or older, will try to do something that they used to be able to do, only to find out after injuring themselves, that they are no longer able to do this.

Designating a healthy, trained employee to do heavy lifting not only helps to prevent injuries, but is also a great way to practice mercy.

## Office Ergonomics

In addition to the injuries that result from unsafe lifting practices, injuries can also occur as a result of improper ergonomic conditions within the workplace; in particular, office workstations. Office workstations present a number of risk factors to employees that can be easily corrected. Repetitive motion injuries from using the keyboard and mouse, eye strain due to poor lighting and muscular stress from improper posture at the workstation are just a few of these risks.

The solution to office workstation ergonomic issues is to conduct an Ergonomic Evaluation of each workstation. This evaluation targets the areas of the workstation that could present physical problems to employees and evaluates the workstation in relationship to the employee who utilizes that space. The risk factors examined include:

### Desktop organization:

Frequently used items should be placed within the employee's normal reach area. This includes placement of the telephone, pens and pencils, stapler, paperclips, paperwork, etc. A well-organized desktop reduces the risk of injuries due to twisting and turning.

### The height of the desk and chair:

Proper posture while sitting creates a neutral body position, which removes unnecessary stress from the body. Make sure the chair height is set so the feet rest firmly on the floor or on a footrest. The employee's thighs should also form a right angle to their shins while sitting. At the same time, the seat of the chair should be high enough in relation to the work surface

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# Seven Common Accident Causes

*"It is better to be careful 100 times than to get killed once."  
-Mark Twain*

Consider this statistic: 80 out of every 100 accidents are the fault of the person involved in the incident. Unsafe acts cause four times as many accidents and injuries as unsafe conditions.

Accidents occur for many reasons. In most industries people tend to look for "things" to blame when an accident happens, because it's easier than looking for "root causes," such as those listed below. Have you been guilty of any of these attitudes or behaviors? If so, you may have not been injured...but next time you may not be so lucky.

- **Taking Shortcuts**
- **Being Over-Confident**
- **Starting a Task with Incomplete Instructions**
- **Poor Housekeeping**
- **Ignoring Safety Precautions**
- **Mental Distractions from Work**
- **Failure to Pre-Plan the Work**

-Information excerpted from [www.safetytoolboxtalks.com](http://www.safetytoolboxtalks.com)

## The Cold Facts— Tips & Trivia



- When skin is exposed to the cold, tiny muscles called *arrector pili* pull hairs erect to trap a layer of insulating air next to the skin while tiny veins and arteries (*arteriovenous anastomoses*) constrict to reduce the flow of blood to the skin's cool surface.
- To keep your feet warm, put on a hat. The greatest amount of body heat escapes from the head.
- As your body gets colder, muscle tension builds, gradually leading to the tremors known as shivering. The synchronized muscular contractions occur at rates of 10 to 20 per second, generating heat to warm the internal organs.
- When the body cannot completely offset heat loss, hypothermia, the drop in internal body temperature (core) to 95 degrees F or below, can occur. Such heat loss can be extremely dangerous and can lead to death.
- Like burns, frostbite can be ranked by degrees of severity. In first-degree frostbite, the skin looks blistered and red. It feels hot and is accompanied by a stinging pain. Second-degree and third-degree frostbite, progressively more severe, affect deeper layers of skin. Pain and damage are also greater and more lasting. The most severe, fourth-degree, affects bone. Frostbite should be treated as soon as possible.

-Information excerpted from Richard Hawk, Inc., [www.richardhawkinc.com](http://www.richardhawkinc.com).

(Proper Lifting and Ergonomics, continued from page 2)

so that the forearms can be positioned at a right angle to the upper arms.

### Lighting:

Be sure that there is enough lighting present to prevent eye strain. Also check to make sure the lighting does not produce a glare on the computer screen, which can also result in unnecessary eye strain.

### Placement of the keyboard:

Position the keyboard close enough to the body so that the employee's fingers can easily reach the home keys of ASD and F on the left, and JKL semicolon on the right. Keep in mind that all of this should be done while maintaining a neutral or stress-free position with the arms. In addition, consider using a wrist rest. This is a support device with rounded edges and a comfortable cushion. It provides support to the wrists in a comfortable, neutral position and reduces pressure on the median nerve of the wrist.

### Mouse location:

The mouse should be a comfortable distance from the keyboard so that the employee does not have to reach for it.

### Height and level of computer screen:

A bad viewing angle or having the eyes too close or too far from the screen can lead to eye and neck strain. Place the monitor 20-40 inches away from the eyes, and position it so that the employee's eyes look down at a 15 to 20 degree angle.

### Document holders:

Keep the document holder on the side of the computer corresponding to the employee's dominant eye. This helps to eliminate back and forth neck motions that can cause fatigue and pain in the shoulders and neck. It also reduces eye strain by avoiding constant refocusing.

After the evaluation is completed, employees and volunteers should be encouraged to plan out their work area and the work that will be done. In addition, consideration should also be given to pacing their workload. Employees and volunteers should rotate tasks so the same work is not done continuously for long periods of time. In addition, relaxation techniques such as stretching should be taught and encouraged, along with adequate breaks.

If an employee or volunteer experiences pain or a strain, they should report their condition immediately. If the condition persists, they should see a doctor. Addressing these issues early can prevent long-term damage.

### **Conclusion**

Parish employees and volunteers should be protected and provided the best environment possible for their mission. Training, planning, communication and supervision should all be a part of the service environment. It is important for parish leaders to take the time and energy necessary to providing a safe, healthy and happy work environment. Everyone involved will benefit from such a proactive approach to ministry protection.

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**Gallagher Bassett Services, Inc.**

If there are any subjects you would like to see addressed in this newsletter, or questions about a topic presented, please contact Ms. Amanda Weller, Gallagher Bassett Services, Inc., Two Pierce Place, Itasca, IL 60143, Telephone: 815-236-5170, Email: [Amanda\\_Weller@gbtpa.com](mailto:Amanda_Weller@gbtpa.com).

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proposed route and expected time of arrival.

- Periodically start vehicles to help ensure they will turn over in the subzero temperatures.
- Make sure all fluids are full, including the vehicle's gas tank.
- Follow these safety rules if you become stranded in your vehicle:
  - Stay with your vehicle unless safety is no more than 100 yards away. Continue to move your arms and legs. Be aware of your surroundings so you can describe them to emergency dispatch to help emergency responders find your location.
  - **Clear Snow from Vehicle Tailpipes.** Last winter, two children from Boston died from carbon monoxide poisoning while sitting inside running vehicles where the tailpipes were clogged with snow. Doctors from the Boston Public Health Commission have created an educational video on carbon monoxide poisoning that addresses this particular risk. To see the video, log on to:  
[http://www.youtube.com/results?search\\_query=7Yy9zxsaeCA&sm=3](http://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=7Yy9zxsaeCA&sm=3)
  - Keep your vehicle visible to others by putting a bright cloth on the antenna, turning on the inside overhead light (when the engine is running) and raising the hood when snow stops falling.

- Run the engine and heater only 10 minutes every hour.
- Keep a downwind window cracked open.
- Keep the vehicle's gas tank full to avoid ice in the tank and fuel lines.
- Use wintertime formula windshield washer fluid.
  - Prepare a winter emergency kit to keep in your car in case you become stranded. Include:
    - ⇒ Blankets
    - ⇒ Food and water
    - ⇒ Booster/jumper cables, flares, tire inflator, and a bag of sand or cat litter (for traction)
    - ⇒ Compass and maps
    - ⇒ Flashlight, battery-powered radio, and extra batteries
    - ⇒ First-aid kit
    - ⇒ Plastic bags (for sanitation).

For more information on cold weather safety, please visit:  
[www.cdc.gov/Features/WinterWeather/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/Features/WinterWeather/index.html)

Source: [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)