Use Your Head When It Comes to Your Feet



Safety Talk

What's at Stake?

Your feet and toes may be at the opposite end from your head, but you still need to use your brain when it comes to which type of shoes you wear in the winter.

What's the Danger?

Not only are your feet farther from your head, they are also farther from your heart than any other part of your body. Just like wearing gloves to keep your hands warm and dry, you need to protect your feet from cold temps and harsh winter conditions.

Slips, trips and falls are all too common when temperatures drop and rain turns to snow and ice. From a bruised ego, a concussion, a broken hip or a fatal fall, winter is no time to put your safety on ice.

How to Protect Yourself

In the winter months, you want to think about three things when it comes to selecting your footwear.

First, consider what you need to get done. Do you just need to slip on a pair of warm boots to keep your toes warm while you shovel the driveway or are you going to be working outside in cold wet conditions?

Second, is fit and comfort. Let's face it, if the shoes aren't comfortable and don't do what you need them to do, you're probably not going to wear them.

Third, you must take into consideration the type of footwear required by your employer. Are you required to wear steel toed shoes for example? Luckily, there are lots of options available when it comes to winter safety shoes.

Here's a short list of other things to consider:

- When working, or walking in deeper snow and sub-freezing conditions, choose heavy duty boots with thick inner insulation and a waterproof outer material like rubber.

- Lighter winter boots, such as insulated hiking boots are better options when you must walk longer distances and generally spend more time in them.
- Many winter boots have a DWR or durable water repellent coating on them. For even better protection in extreme weather, look for boots with a waterproof breathable membrane, such as Gore-Tex®.
- Invest in warm socks that wick moisture away from your feet. Merino wool and some synthetic fibers are perfect for warmth and wicking and will keep feet warm and dry.
- Finally, do your own research and get professionally fitted.
    - Try on the footwear with the type of socks you intend to wear with them.
    - Whatever footwear you choose they should be comfortable but not constricting as this can cause circulation issues and colder feeling toes.

Final Word

Your comfort and safety should be top of mind when it comes to choosing winter footwear.