

March 7, 2007

<b>DIRECTIVE:</b> JOB CORPS INFORMATION NOTICE NO. 06-23
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**TO:**                    ALL JOB CORPS NATIONAL OFFICE STAFF  
                          ALL JOB CORPS REGIONAL OFFICE STAFF  
                          ALL JOB CORPS CENTER DIRECTORS  
                          ALL JOB CORPS CENTER OPERATORS  
                          ALL NATIONAL TRAINING AND SUPPORT CONTRACTORS  
                          ALL OUTREACH, ADMISSIONS, AND CTS CONTRACTORS

**FROM:**               ESTHER R. JOHNSON, Ed.D.  
                          National Director  
                          Office of Job Corps

**SUBJECT:**            Best Practices for Preventing Cold Weather Injuries and the Importance of  
                          Snow Removal from Common Areas

1.     Purpose. To communicate best practices for protection against human health hazards during the cold weather season.
2.     Background. During fiscal year (FY) 2003, Job Corps experienced one fatal incident in which students were caught under a snow-covered awning that collapsed. Approximately 12–15 students were walking into the cafeteria when an awning that covered the main entrance of the building collapsed. Blizzard conditions had created snowdrifts of up to 18 inches on top of the awning, and the weight of the snow caused the structure to give way. Eight students were treated for injuries, and one student was pronounced dead at the scene.

As heavy snows and low temperatures persist throughout parts of the United States, especially in areas around the Great Lakes, it is important for Center Directors, safety officers, and wellness managers to understand that cold-weather injuries range from uncomfortable to life threatening, and communicate this awareness to other staff and students.

3.     Preventive Measures. The National Office of Job Corps recommends that centers take the following preventive measures to limit human health hazards associated with cold weather and winter precipitation:

- a.     Avoid ice. Walking on ice is extremely dangerous. Many cold-weather injuries

result from falls on ice-covered sidewalks, steps, driveways, and porches. Keep all steps and walkways as free of ice as possible by using rock salt or another chemical de-icing compound. Sand may also be used on walkways to reduce the risk of slipping.

- b. Dress for the cold. Wearing proper clothes keeps the body warm and dry. The best clothing has good ventilation so sweat can evaporate. Wet clothes increase heat loss and do not protect against cold weather.
- c. Remove snow. Clearing snow from stairs, sidewalks, roadways, and other areas accessible to students and staff (e.g., entrances, exits, awnings) is critical for maintaining safe grounds. Personnel responsible for snow removal should be physically able to perform the work.

According to the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons, snow shoveling and snow blowing can increase injuries to the back, shoulders, and wrists. The improper use of equipment combined with performing unfamiliar exercises increases the likelihood of injuries from shoveling or using a snow blower. The following safety tips may help reduce the risk of injury to staff or students who perform snow removal:

- (1) *Check with your doctor.* Because this activity places high stress on the heart, you should always speak with your physician before shoveling or snow blowing. Individuals who are not physically able to perform strenuous work should not take part in clean-up activities.
- (2) *Dress appropriately.* Light, layered, water-repellent clothing provides both ventilation and insulation. It is also important to wear appropriate head coverings, gloves, thick socks, and waterproof boots.
- (3) *Pace yourself.* Snow shoveling and blowing are aerobic activities, comparable to weightlifting. Take frequent breaks and replenish fluids to prevent dehydration. If you experience chest pain, shortness of breath, or other signs of a heart attack, seek immediate emergency care, such as calling 9-1-1.
- (4) *Warm up your muscles.* Shoveling can be a vigorous activity. Before you begin this physical workout, warm up your muscles for 10 minutes with light exercise.
- (5) *Clear snow early and often.* Begin when a light covering of snow is on the ground to avoid shoveling packed, heavy snow.
- (6) *Use a shovel that is comfortable for your height and strength.* Do not use a shovel that is too heavy or too long. Space your hands on the tool grip to increase your leverage.

- (7) *Push snow instead of lifting it*, but if you must lift, do it properly. Use good technique—squat with your legs apart, knees bent, and back straight.
- (8) *Lift with your legs*, without bending at the waist. Scoop small amounts of snow into the shovel and walk to where you want to dump it. Holding a shovelful of snow with your arms outstretched puts too much weight on your spine. Never remove deep snow all at once; do it piecemeal.
- (9) *Do not throw the snow over your shoulder or to the side*. This requires a twisting motion that stresses your back.
- (10) *See what you are shoveling/snow blowing*. Keep hats and scarves out of your line of vision. Watch for ice patches and uneven surfaces.
- (11) *Avoid falls by wearing shoes or boots that have slip-resistant soles*.
- (12) *Read the instruction manual*. Prior to using a snow blower, read the instruction manual for specific safety hazards or unfamiliar features, and whenever attempting to repair or maintain the snow blower.
- (13) *Do not leave the snow blower unattended*. Motorized equipment should never be left unattended or accessible to untrained students and staff.
- (14) *Watch the snow blower cord*. If you are operating an electric snow blower, be aware of where the power cord is at all times.
- (15) *Add fuel before starting the snow blower*. Never add fuel when the engine is running or hot. Do not operate the machine in an enclosed area.
- (16) *Never stick your hands in the snow blower*. If snow becomes too impacted, stop the engine immediately. Refer to the instruction manual for safe maintenance instruction.

*Source:* The American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons, <http://www.aaos.org>.

- d. Know the signs of cold weather injuries in order to recognize when staff or students may need medical attention:
  - (1) Frostnip usually affects areas that are exposed to the cold, such as the cheeks, nose, ears, fingers, and toes, leaving them white and numb. Frostnip can be treated at home.
  - (2) Frostbite is a serious injury in which deep layers of tissue freezes, causing tissue damage.
  - (3) Hypothermia is a life-threatening condition in which the core, or rectal,

body temperature falls below 95°F. Persons suffering from hypothermia may lose consciousness.

e. Consult additional references:

- (1) American Red Cross:  
[http://www.redcross.org/services/prepare/0,1082,0\\_252\\_00.html](http://www.redcross.org/services/prepare/0,1082,0_252_00.html)
- (2) National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Weather Service: <http://www.nws.noaa.gov/om/winter/index.shtml>
- (3) National Highway Traffic Safety Administration:  
[http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/cars/testing/ncap/3693WinterDriving/wintertips6\\_10.html](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/cars/testing/ncap/3693WinterDriving/wintertips6_10.html)

4. Action. Addressees are to ensure this Information Notice is distributed to all appropriate staff.

5. Expiration Date. Until superseded.

6. Inquiries. Inquiries should be directed to Marsha Fitzhugh at (202) 693-3099 or [fitzhugh.marsha@dol.gov](mailto:fitzhugh.marsha@dol.gov).