

Silver Creek Fire Department

Snow Removal Injuries



Back injuries are one of the most common injuries sustained during snow removal. Shoveling snow with the wrong body mechanics stresses the spine & often times leads to muscle strains, falls, or more serious injuries.

Pick the Right Tool



An ergonomic snow shovel will alleviate some of the snow removal effort. A curved or adjustable handle will reduce bending, requiring you to slightly bend your knees & arch your back, yet keeping the shovel on the ground. A lightweight plastic shovel will also reduce the amount of weight you need to lift.

Warm Up Completely



Tight muscles (cold) are more susceptible to injury than flexible muscles (warm). Warm up for five to ten minutes before shoveling. A brisk walk will get your blood moving & a stretch of the lower back, hamstrings, arms, & shoulders will limber up your body.

Pace Yourself



Removing small amounts of snow frequently is less strenuous than removing one large pile. Remove a few inches at a time in deep snow. Take a short break every 10-15 minutes. Another stretch of your arms, shoulders, & back will keep them warm & flexible.

Ergonomic Lifting Techniques

- When possible, push the snow to one side rather than lifting it.
- Face the object you intend to lift.
- Bend at the hips, not the low back, push the chest out, pointing forward. Bend your knees & lift with your leg muscles, keeping your back straight.
- Grip the shovel as close to the blade as possible & the other hand on the handle.
- Avoid twisting the back – pivot your whole body to face the new direction.
- Walk to the new location rather than reaching or tossing the snow.

Slips & Falls



Slick surfaces can lead to slips, falls, & strains. Boots with a good tread will help prevent slipping. Spreading sand or salt will also increase traction.

Snow Blowers



A snow blower can reduce the amount of stress on the body. While using a snow blower, avoid stressing your back by using the power of your legs to push the snow blower while keeping your back straight and knees bent.

A Good Neighbor



Elderly friends, family, & neighbors may need help with their snow removal. Helping them can prevent injuries while trying to remove the snow themselves. If health or injuries make shoveling unsafe for you, don't be afraid to ask for help from your neighbors or a snow removal service rather than removing the snow yourself.