

Snowplow Operator Wellness Tips

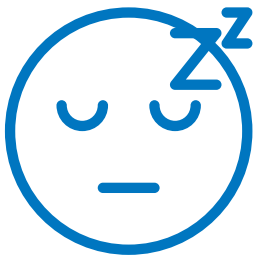
Incorporate Wellness Into Your Plan

As Public Safety employees, DPW Snowplow Operators are tasked with keeping the roads safe following winter storms and thus should be trained accordingly. Educate your staff on the risks involved from a health standpoint during the plow season and communicate your wellness-related expectations. This critical emergency response function is often taken for granted but the risks associated are high and require a professional, robust approach to ensure each operator is trained appropriately.



Hydration

- If your body is dehydrated it will become fatigued or lethargic. As your blood volume decreases, less blood is pumped to your heart and brain, which contributes to feelings of fatigue.
- Coffee, soda, and energy drinks that are high in caffeine contribute to dehydration. Although these drinks provide a short-term stimulant effect, they will eventually wear off and cause a crash effect.
- Avoid chronic dehydration - as a gauge, drink at least half of your body weight in ounces of water each day. (200 lbs =100 oz.)
- Signs of dehydration could include dry mouth, dry skin, muscle cramps, lightheadedness, dark urine, irritability, and tiredness.
- Avoid alcohol - alcohol consumption, even in moderation, will increase fatigue and cause dehydration.



Fatigue

- Explain the importance of self-monitoring fatigue levels and taking breaks.
- Communicate regularly with all operators to determine if they need a break. Do not put the public at risk by pushing your limits. If possible, provide a sleeping room during the winter with cots or encourage those employees who live in town to go home to rest.
- Keep in mind that circumstances may change at home (sick family member, newborn child, injuries, stress) that can impact fatigue.
- Be mindful of any medications taken that could contribute to fatigue levels.
- Plan ahead for extra rest as needed. Since we all know storms are coming during the winter, take extra steps to ensure proper rest throughout the season.



Dress in Layers

- Since take-out options are limited during storms, it is best to plan ahead by bringing in healthy meals such as turkey chili, soups, and fajitas. Provide your staff with healthy meals to help improve their fatigue levels.
- Fast foods or foods high in sugar will contribute to fatigue. These foods cause the digestive system to work harder and contribute to feelings of lethargy.
- Eat foods high in protein and healthy carbohydrates to help sustain energy levels.

Know the Signs of Heart Attacks

During the winter DPW professionals see an uptick in heart attacks. This is due to a number of factors, pre-existing and undiagnosed circulatory problems, chronic lack of sleep, increased workload, poor diet, and poor hydration. Additionally cold temperatures require your respiratory system to work harder to breathe as you're your nasal cavity and windpipe work to warm up cold air to your body's temperature. When you factor in snow shoveling, it can be a recipe for disaster. Prepare your body for the increased work load by staying hydrated, eating healthy and getting plenty of sleep.



Eat Healthy

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