

Alabama Guardsman

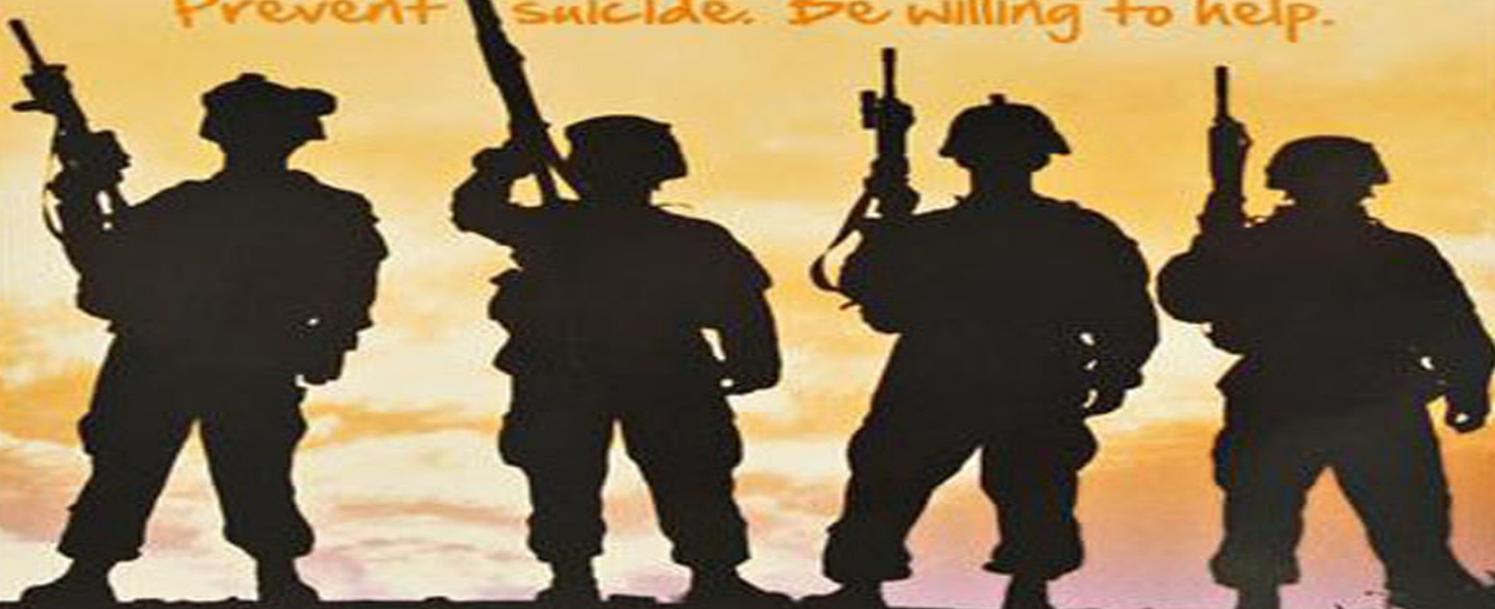
Vol. X 2012

A publication for the Citizen-Soldiers & Airmen of Alabama

Shoulder to Shoulder

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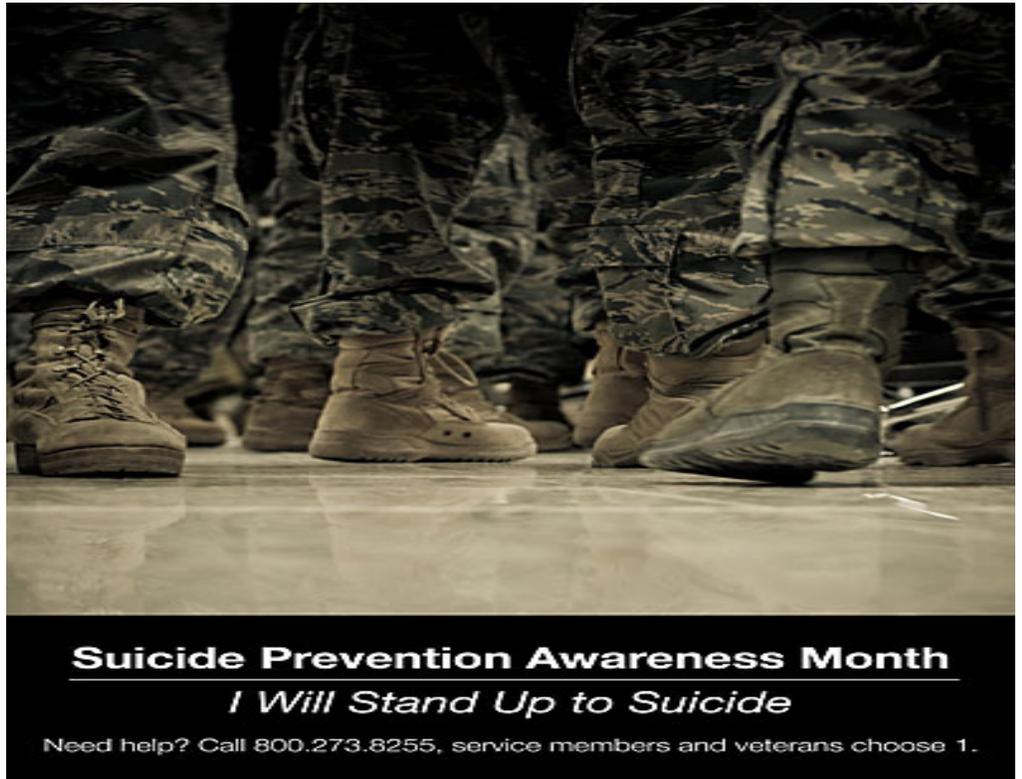
Alabama focuses on suicide prevention in October

by Jamie Brown
131st MPAD

Suicide is a problem that has hit all parts of society, but it is one that has particularly affected the military in recent years. But the military and the Alabama National Guard have decided to fight this enemy head-on. During its October drill, the Alabama National Guard focused on suicide prevention with intensive training for Soldiers and Airmen.

"One suicide is too many," said Maj. Gen. Perry Smith, the adjutant general of Alabama. "We must do whatever is necessary to ensure our Soldiers and Airmen are trained and resilient. Suicide is an enemy just as dangerous as any we face on the battlefield, and we must defeat it just as we defeat all of our enemies."

"Increasing awareness and reducing stigma on the subject of suicide is always important," said Dr. Rebecca Jacobson, resilience, risk reduction and suicide prevention program manager for the Alabama National Guard. "For the previous two fiscal years, the Alabama National Guard has experi-



Contributed/photo

The Alabama Guard used the month of October as a suicide stand-down month. Every member of the Alabama National Guard received suicide prevention training.

enced three deaths as a result of suicide within each fiscal year. A common theme within those losses was that each Soldier made contact with other Guard members. They called, texted or had contact with someone they considered a friend within the Alabama Guard. It was not their leadership, or mental health resources (despite availability) or often even a family member or loved one, but a colleague who was contacted with some type of 'I just can't go on living like this' general comment.

As a counselor, I know the anxiety of getting that type of call and cannot imagine what it would be like to receive that call without any type of training to handle it. However, that is exactly what happens to men and women in the Alabama National Guard. A month that increases awareness, provides training and allows for discussion of the topic is just one step towards handling and preventing suicide."

"I believe that the suicide prevention (Please see *PREVENTION*, page 6)

Alabama Guardsman

The Alabama Guardsman is published by the 131st Mobile Public Affairs Detachment, Alabama Army National Guard. Submissions are encouraged and should be e-mailed to the 131st MPAD, int-paoal@ng.army.mil, (334) 213-7572. The views and opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the Department of Defense, the Department of the Army, the National Guard Bureau or the Alabama National Guard. This publication is electronically published on the Alabama National Guard website.

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On the Cover

Suicide has become a military-wide problem. To combat this growing tragedy, the Alabama National Guard emphasized suicide prevention during the month of October with extensive suicide prevention training.

Adjutant General

The Alabama Guard takes up the fight against suicide



**Maj. Gen.
Perry Smith**

During this month's drill period, the Alabama National Guard focused on suicide prevention. This included recognizing warning signs, knowing how to help a buddy in danger and

how to live more resilient lives.

Suicide is a great problem in America and in the military. While we thankfully have fewer numbers of suicides in the Alabama National Guard than the military as a whole, we have

suffered loss. This is a tragedy.

For Soldiers and Airmen at any level to accept this problem as status quo shows a lack of leadership. We need to take this problem head on and fight it. Each member of our organization is a valuable member of a team. We must prove that we believe in that value by recognizing warning signs of suicide, showing concern for our Soldiers and Airmen and assisting them when they need help.

The military has developed several programs to help in combating suicide and I encourage each Guardsman to pursue training in these programs (e.g. Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training [ASIST]).

I know that as leaders we are very

busy. Sometimes it feels as though we have more responsibilities and training objectives during a drill weekend than we know how to complete. With that said, though, we must take this time to emphasize all-around resilience, mental fitness, care for our Soldiers and Airmen and the value of each member of our organization.

If you are having suicidal thoughts, please seek help. Please know that you are valued and needed. If you have a buddy who is showing the warning signs, step up and care for that Soldier or Airman. As leaders, emphasize resilience and suicide prevention. We must stop this problem! We cannot afford to let it persist. Lead from the front!

State Command Sergeant Major

Training helps Guardsmen answer the call to prevent suicide



**Command Sgt.
Maj.
Eddie Pike**

As members of the Alabama National Guard, we are used to answering the call. Whenever our country or state has needed us in war or to respond to

disasters, we have been there, ready to serve.

But today I want to talk to you about another call, the call from a warrior in need to his fellow Soldiers or Air-

men. It has been shown that Alabama Guardmembers who have committed suicide, reached out to fellow Guardsmen before they took that desperate action. In several cases they placed calls to their first line leaders. This was on my mind during the month of October as the Alabama National Guard has been focused on suicide prevention.

It is my hope that everyone took the training to heart. You never know when you will put it to use. We never leave a fallen comrade behind. That doesn't just mean on the battlefield. If one of our Guard brothers or sisters is in danger, even danger

from themselves, it is our duty to help them, to lift them up and do whatever we can to avoid tragedy. We are a family and as a family we need to look out for each other and help each other through difficult times.

But we don't just need to look out for each other. We need to also look out for ourselves. Life presents all kinds of challenges and sometimes they can be too much for one person to bear. As Soldiers and Airmen we practice preventive maintenance on all of our equipment. We also need to perform preventive maintenance on ourselves, **(Please see SUICIDE, page 6)**

Snap Shots

A look at some of the recent highlights from the Alabama National Guard



Andrew Richardson/photo

A Soldier takes a defensive position as the 135th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) prepares for its deployment during training at Pelham Range, Ala. This unit, commanded by a one-star general, deployed only two years ago as the first general officer commanded unit deployed from the Alabama National Guard in the current war.



Contributed/photo

Soldiers from the 115th Expeditionary Signal Battalion, from Florence, Ala., arrived on Fort Bliss Biggs Army Airfield Oct. 13, 2012, after a ten-month tour in Afghanistan.



Johnathan Wilson/photo

Seven E-9s retired from the Alabama National Guard in the last 6 months. They were formally retired and honored for their service Oct. 20, at the Fall 2012 Alabama E-9 Retirement Banquet and Ceremony at the Pelham Civic Complex in Pelham, Ala. family, friends and guests attended the banquet where the seven honorees and their spouses were honored for their service to the Alabama National Guard. Pictured from left to right: State Command Sgt. Maj. Eddie Pike, Sgt. Maj. John O'Rourke, Sgt. Maj. James Dunaway, Command Sgt. Maj. Larry Weems, Command Sgt. Maj. James Hood, Chief Master Sgt. James Moseley Jr., Command Chief Master Sgt. Michael Cone, and State Command Chief Master Sgt. Larry Adams (not pictured: Sgt. Maj. David Williams).



Contributed/photo

Soldiers from Alpha Company - 115th Expeditionary Signal Battalion carry the company's guidon Oct. 6, while participating in the Army 10 Miler at Kandahar Airfield in Afghanistan. The 115th mobilized in October 2011 in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, and returned home earlier this month.



Brian Hanna/photo

Command Sgt. Maj. James Hood, out-going command sergeant major of the 161st Multifunctional Medical Battalion (MMB) relinquishes responsibility as the command sergeant major of the 161st by passing the NCO Sword to 122nd Theater Support Command Brigade Command Sergeant Major Rickie Surovich on Oct. 13, at Fort Whiting. Command Sgt. Maj. Tonny Pridgen assumed the command sergeant major position for the 161st MMB.



Andrew Richardson/photo

Soldiers from the 135th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) simulate room clearing as the unit prepares for its deployment during training at Pelham Range, Ala.

(PREVENTION from page 2)

prevention training was very beneficial to our Soldiers,” said 1st Sgt. Brian Massey, first sergeant for Joint Force Headquarters. “The training highlighted the signs and symptoms that people often show and measures that we can take to intervene and save a person’s life.”

The suicide training in October is just one facet of the Alabama Guard’s fight against suicide. There is an entire program designed to combat suicide in the Alabama National Guard.

“The resilience, risk reduction and suicide prevention program was designed with two goals in mind,” said 1st Lt. Jennifer Moore, suicide prevention program manager. “The first was to reduce suicides and suicidal thoughts and attempts within the Alabama Guard. In 2012, Dr. Jacobson received at least one Serious Incident Report (SIR) every month except July. The second was to present training to Soldiers and their families that would provide coping skills and insight as to how to handle life’s ups and downs.

“To address the first goal, National Guard Bureau implemented the Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST). ASIST is designed as a hands on, two-day training that walks participants through several situations that could involve suicide and teaches those participants exactly what to do and say should they need to intervene

(SUICIDE from page 3)

not just physically but mentally and emotionally as well. If you feel overwhelmed and find yourself having thoughts of suicide, please find someone to talk to. Asking for help is a sign of strength and perseverance. Find a battle buddy

in a suicidal incident. The two-day classes are taught by Soldiers who have attended the ASIST (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training) five day training. ASIST teaches Soldiers how to implement the ACE (Ask, Care, Escort) procedure. As Soldiers participate in this course, they are given the opportunity to discuss attitudes and beliefs about the topic of suicide as well as how to listen to others who may have a different perspective on the topic. Discussion raises awareness and reduces the stigma that is often associated with the topic.

“The second program adopted by National Guard Bureau is the Master Resilience Training. This program teaches coping skills that will help individuals avoid thoughts of despair that occur when facing life’s challenges, building mental toughness and strength of character. Modules include training on ‘Avoiding Thinking Traps, Problem Solving, Putting it in Perspective, Hunting the Good Stuff, and Real-time Resilience.’ This three day training is offered by the Alabama National Guard for those who are E-6 and above in an effort to provide two hours of quarterly resilience training to all units.”

The Alabama Guard’s fight against suicide is going to have to be a team effort and the suicide prevention program is trying to train as many Guardsmen as possible.

and talk to them. We also have an Alabama National Guard prevention program. Contact them. They are there for you. You are not alone. There are more 13,000 Alabama National Guardsmen standing by your side. Each one of you is a valu-

“The first goal of the suicide prevention program is to reduce death by suicide to zero within the Alabama National Guard,” said Jacobson. “The way we intend to reduce that number is to offer ASIST training to all first line leaders. In fiscal year 2012, six ASIST workshops were held and 120 Soldiers attended. Every class that was held provided very positive feedback and had at least one individual within the class whose life had already been touched by suicide. Currently, six ASIST classes have been scheduled for fiscal year 2013.”

The following ASIST Courses are scheduled for FY 13:

6-9 November – Fort Taylor Hardin

9-11 Jan – Montgomery

12-14 Feb Ft. McClellan

6-8 Mar Ft. Taylor Hardin

5-7 Jun – Army Reserve Center, Mobile

10-12 Jul – Ft. Taylor Hardin

*Recommended course for all first line leaders!!

**The Yellow Ribbon program pays both travel & orders for AL ARNG members. Each class has a quota of 30 and seats can be reserved by contacting 1LT Jennifer Moore, Jennifer.e.moore4@us.army.mil.

able member of our team. I pray that each of you found value in our Suicide Prevention training and I pray that we never lose another Alabama Guardsman to suicide again.

Guard helps kick off Red Ribbon activities

by Staff Sgt. Sandra Lucas
131st MPAD

Approximately 1,500 Montgomery Public School students were greeted by the Alabama State University drum line and dance team during the Red Ribbon drug awareness kickoff event at the Dunn Oliver Acadome Oct. 19. Reddy, the Alabama National Guard counterdrug mascot, was present to help kick off the annual event.

“The National Guard recognizes the Citizen Soldier fulfills more than a combat need,” said Staff Sgt. Randell Dodd, Alabama National Guard Counterdrug Program, Prevention Treatment Outreach office. “The Guard is interested in our future. Since 9/11, the focus is combat and that is important, but this is our future,” said Dodd.

Red Ribbon Week is the nation’s oldest and largest drug prevention program. Communities wear red ribbons and participate in community anti-drug events. Wearing the red ribbon during the last week of October symbolizes zero tolerance for alcohol, drug, and tobacco use. An estimated 80 million people participate in Red Ribbon events each year.

“Guess what else I see, when I look at them (illegal drug users) real close? Their

hair is falling out, they’re missing teeth, they have sores on their skin, it’s really ugly,” said Montgomery County District Attorney Ellen Brooks. “Sometimes if you look at their fingers you can see where they have been burned doing drugs. And if you could look inside and look at their brain, their brain wouldn’t be as big as yours, their brain cells are dying from drugs. Who would want to do a stupid thing like that?” said Brooks.

The Acadome was electric with music, dancing, gifts flying in the air, cheers and chanting. “You are drug free the way to be. The best me is drug free.”

The Alabama National Guard provides prevention training, referrals and outreach to military families. For assistance or additional information call 334 274-6304 and ask for a PTO representative.



Sandra Lucas/photo

Reddy dances with some of his friends during the Red Ribbon drug awareness kickoff event at the Dunn Oliver Acadome Oct. 19, 2012. Reddy the Alabama National Guard counterdrug mascot was present to help kick off the annual event. This year the mascot was donned by Staff Sgt. Chris Harris from the Alabama National Guard Counterdrug Program, Civil Operations office. The Civil Operations mission is to organize National Guard resources and members in support of drug demand reduction programs for youth with focus on family, school and the community.



Safety First ... Prevention Always!



GET IN GEAR



ALWAYS WEAR THE MANDATORY PPE:

- DOT APPROVED HELMET
- EYE PROTECTION
- LONG PANTS
- LONG SLEEVED SHIRT/JACKET
- FULL FINGERED GLOVES
- OVER THE ANKLE BOOTS/SHOES
- HIGH VISIBILITY GARMENTS – BRIGHT COLOR FOR DAY AND RETRO REFLECTIVE FOR NIGHT





Alabama dentist eases tooth pain in Afghanistan

by Sgt. Bethany L. Little
Headquarters, Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force-Afghanistan

BAGHLAN PROVINCE, Afghanistan-- Members of the Tapagurghan Afghan Local Police (ALP) had the opportunity to visit with a very humble but special doctor this summer.

Coalition advisors provided a Dentist to their ALP counterparts for acute and chronic dental emergencies that the local village could not treat.

"Many of the local dentists here are unable or not certified to take care of extractions or abscessed teeth, so many suffer in pain for years before having their mouths looked at," said a coalition advisor.

For the ALP who have the daily duty to protect their village, they do the best they can with what they have and pray they make it through the pain.

"I went for an entire year with my mouth in such pain," said Gul Mohammad, the assistant Tapagurghan ALP commander. "I tried to go to the dentist here but he said that he couldn't help me and sent me looking elsewhere."

Arriving for only five days, Lt. Col. Robert Holmes, from the Alabama National Guard's Medical Detachment and a comprehensive restorative and surgical dentist with Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force Afghanistan (CJSOTF-A), performed more than 45 oral surgeries that included extractions of badly decayed, abscessed teeth and impacted wisdom teeth.

Holmes's main mission is to treat service members within CJSOTF-A, but when requested he is able to treat some Afghan counterparts such as

ALP members.

"I can only treat emergencies or acute patients because I'm not trying to take away from the local economy here," said Holmes.

"Many of these patients have suffered months on end from pain. It's so powerful to be able to help them and take care of them. They'll always remember that."

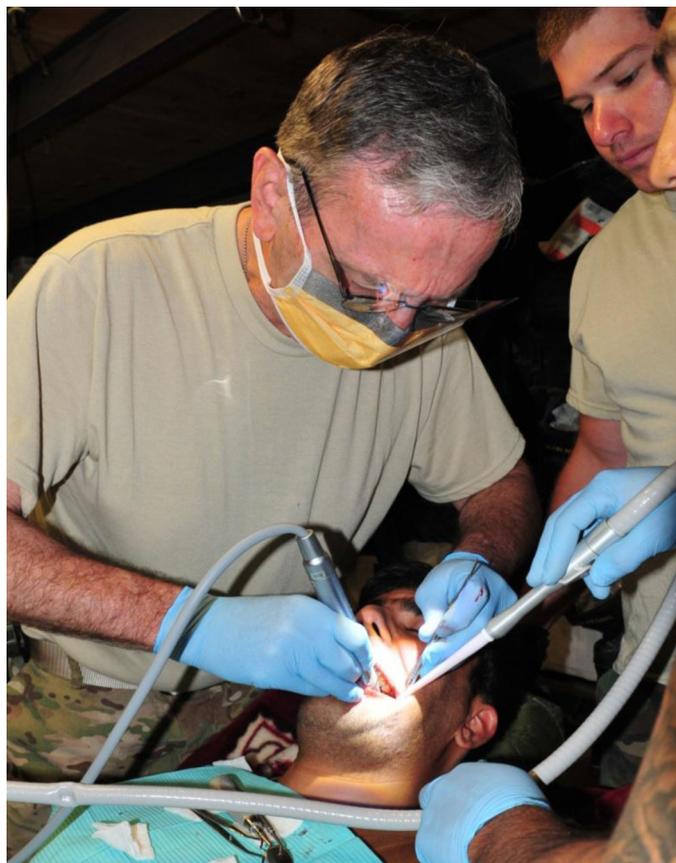
Holmes, with his slight Alabama accent, goes to work immediately making the patients feel comfortable.

"Now, if you feel any pain, just raise your left hand and we'll stop, okay," he tells one of his patients before he gets to work.

Once he is at work, his surgeon hands are steady and proficient. Skillfully cracking the jaw bone to release each of the teeth, and pulling the shards out with ease and grace.

With every terrifying sound, he quickly assures his patients that they're okay as he explains what he's doing inside their mouths.

"Earlier today, before the surgery, I really only wanted him to rid me of the two really bad teeth I had because I couldn't stand the pain anymore. I had another one I wanted looked at but I was afraid I would be in too much pain," said Mohammad. "But after I saw how fast and easily he removed the first two, I mentioned the third problem tooth, which he also



Contributed/photo

Lt. Col. Robert Holmes, from the Alabama National Guard's Medical Detachment and a comprehensive restorative and surgical dentist with Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force Afghanistan (CJSOTF-A), performs oral surgery on a member of the Afghan Local Police.

took out very easily."

According to Holmes, that third tooth was the worst tooth in Mohammad's mouth with a bad abscess and cyst.

Despite all of his hard work Holmes remains humble and gentlemanly as he talks to his patients while they pass by. He walks up to them, shakes their hand and re-examines their mouths to make sure they're fine.

"It's not about how many patients I see, you see," he says. "It's about making them feel better and taking care of them. That's what they remember, not so much what you did for them, but how you made them feel."



ALARNG Monthly Safety Bulletin

SAFETY FIRST! PREVENTION ALWAYS! 26 October 2012

Don't Fall for Slipping and Tripping Hazards

Falls always have an element of surprise. The surprise factor is what makes falls a standard comedy routine. But falls aren't at all fun when they are real. Falls are one of the leading causes of workplace injury and death. And these aren't necessarily falls from heights such as ladders or construction scaffolds. Most are falls from the same level, caused by slipping or tripping. Falls can happen anytime and anywhere, but with winter just around the corner, it is time to also make sure we are prepared to prevent slips on ice and snow.



Here are some reminders about preventing falls:

- ◆ Keep obstructions out of walkways. These items are common causes of tripping accidents - stored materials, equipment, cables, cords, hoses, scrap, and trash.
- ◆ Keep doors and drawers of cabinets and workbenches closed.
- ◆ Clean up any spills promptly. If this is not possible, make sure there is a barricade and sign.
- ◆ Floor coverings such as carpets, mats, and tiles should be secured to prevent tripping hazards. Report any problems you find.
- ◆ Stay under the speed limit when you are walking. Don't run in your work area.
- ◆ Make sure your footwear won't trip you up. It should fit well and have low heels. Keep your shoelaces tied. The tread should be adequate for travelling safely on slippery surfaces. Keep your shoes in good repair.
- ◆ If you are carrying an item, be sure you can see over it or around it. This is especially important on stairways.
- ◆ If you slip or trip - even if you are not injured - take a moment to figure out the cause. Correct or report any hazards such as wet floors or obstacles in traffic areas.

Falls are a hazard at work any time of the year. But winter weather adds a greater element of danger:

- ◆ Report any hazardous conditions such as ice on a sidewalk or water in an entry area. It may not be your job to shovel snow or mop up spills, but it is certainly your responsibility to report hazards so they can be corrected before someone is injured.
- ◆ Outdoor walkways and steps should be kept free of ice, snow, mud, and wet leaves.
- ◆ Entrances and interior traffic areas should also be kept free of water and ice. There should be mats at the doorways to remove snow, water, and mud from footwear.
- ◆ Extra measures should be taken to ensure safe footing on sloped floor surfaces, such as ramps.
- ◆ When walking on slippery surfaces go slowly and take small steps.
 - ◆ Wear shoes or boots with non-slip soles. Special footwear with cleats is available for especially slippery conditions.
 - ◆ Watch your footing as you get in or out of vehicles. When climbing in or out of equipment cabs, keep a firm grip on the handholds and watch out for ice on the footholds, and mud or ice on your shoes.
 - ◆ Winter weather calls for extra caution when working at heights. Make sure surfaces such as ladder rungs and scaffold decks are free of ice and snow.



Falls aren't funny. They cause serious injuries and death. Watch your step to prevent falls, especially in winter conditions.

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SAFETY BULLETIN