



Safety for Volunteer Observers



Your safety is very important to us! Do not expose yourself to dangerous conditions to make an observation. Do not go out during thunderstorms, severe weather, or other conditions (ice, snow, high winds) which you feel may compromise your safety.

Don't forget to include safety in your daily observations!

Given the different types of weather conditions we may be in slips, trips, and falls or being struck-by an object are potential hazards. Here are some prevention tips:

- First and foremost, assess the safety of venturing outside. Especially if there was a storm, are there down power lines, limbs, branches or other debris that make it too hazardous to go out? Check for areas of poor drainage like around pipes and drains.
- When assessing for safety, check not only below (the ground) but above for hazards such as icicles or overhanging limbs, debris or power lines. Check around the area, too as unsecured items may have been blown around in high winds.
- Don't forget to check the condition of stairs and handrails.
- Remember the National Weather Service's 30/30 Rule: The first "30" represents 30 seconds. If the time between when you see the flash and hear the thunder is 30 seconds or less, the lightning is close enough to hit you - seek shelter immediately. The second "30" stands for 30 minutes. After the last flash of lightning, wait 30 minutes before leaving your shelter. Of course their slogan "When thunder roars, stay indoors!" is very important to follow.
- Create a specific path that is clear and level as possible to your outside equipment. Treat it as you would a driveway or sidewalk in inclement weather; never stray and take shortcuts either. If irregularities occur in the path (and can't be immediately repaired), put a marker or flag so you know where the hazard is.

- Dress for the season – make sure you are protected from the elements including the cold and wet weather.
- That includes checking your footwear – avoid smooth soles especially if walking on uneven ground or slick surfaces. Flat shoes with convolutions are best for gripping surfaces and obviously avoid heels!
- Speaking of footwear - for icy, snowy conditions consider wearing an overshoe for added traction. There are many on the market today with different surfaces, such as small knobs or gritted surfaces.
- Try to use pockets to carry items, such as your ruler, notepad, etc. This leaves you hands-free for balance in poor conditions. A small backpack of your needed gear can help.
- Carry a cell phone in case you need to call for an emergency – but NEVER use it while walking.
- Walk like a penguin in slick conditions! Keep your feet about shoulder width apart and take smaller steps.
- Poor lighting is often a cause of accidents and injuries. Since many of us do our readings at 7:00 a.m. it may be dark so carry a flashlight to see your path. A headlamp which allows you to be hands free.
- Many slips, trips and falls happen indoors, especially in entry ways. Make sure to clear your footwear/clothes of snow and ice or other slick elements before entering back inside. A walk-off mat is often helpful to remove contaminants. Make sure the mat has beveled edges and the edges aren't curling or overlap with another mat.
- Lastly, never rush or get distracted!!! Focus on your surroundings.