

6th December 2010

Worsening Underfoot Conditions Leading to Large Numbers of Fractures and Dislocations

At the time of the IAEM press release on 3rd December 2010, the country's Emergency Departments (EDs) had seen an upsurge in the number of musculoskeletal injuries caused by falls during the ongoing severe weather however the extent of the problem had not reached the levels seen during the severe winter weather in late December 2009 and early January 2010. With the beginnings of a thaw followed by intense freezing, underfoot conditions have significantly worsened resulting in even larger numbers patients with fractures and dislocations presenting to EDs around the country. Falls in icy conditions tend to be heavy and result in greater degrees of bone and joint trauma than "normal" falls. Many victims require surgical intervention rather than treatment in Plaster alone. The increased number of patients needing surgical procedures on the background of bed closures throughout the country has resulted in worsening overcrowding in already overcrowded EDs where patients who have been admitted for surgery are obliged to wait in the ED with other admitted inpatients pending allocation of a hospital bed.

The Association seeks the assistance of the public in being patient as waiting times to be seen are likely to increase nationwide and those who require hospital admission they are likely to spend a significant period of their admission on an ED trolley.

In view of the potentially life changing implications of a serious fracture or dislocation the Association reminds the public of the importance of trying to avoid sustaining the injury in the first place.

Please ensure that you

- only go outside when absolutely necessary and dress appropriately for the weather
- have appropriate footwear with a good grip
- walk slowly and carefully bearing in mind that ice is not always visible
- do not walk with your hands in your pockets
- do not use a mobile phone when walking

Doing the latter will cause an inability to get an arm out to break one's fall and may result in a more significant head or chest injury

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