

7th January 2009

IAEM warns of delays for those attending the country's Emergency Departments.

Over the past three weeks, Ireland's Emergency Departments (EDs) have been inundated with large numbers of patients sustaining injuries after falling or slipping on snow and ice. These injuries are mainly musculoskeletal and particularly involve the upper limbs. From the weekend before Christmas to date, EDs have been consistently seeing up to 10 times their normal daily fracture workload. Many of these injuries are severe enough to require operative intervention with consequent impacts on local Orthopaedic services. Unfortunately, the impact of these injuries has been to increase waiting times in EDs and increase the number of admitted patients who remain in EDs because there is no available hospital bed.

Our members' experience has been that many of these falls have taken place on footpaths and close to people's homes where there may not be obvious visible snow or ice. Our strong advice to the public is to wear appropriate footwear, take exceptional care when walking and ensure that vulnerable people are carefully supported and supervised should they have to walk outside. Taking appropriate care at this dangerous time may prevent an injury which may require an operation and potentially result in some degree of permanent disability.

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