

## REVIEW OF LAST MONTH'S TALK

Before we discuss this month's topic, let's review last month's Safety Talk about **Cold Stress**:

- What is the definition of cold stress and when are we most at risk of experiencing it?
- What are some injuries that can occur because of exposure to cold weather?
- What are some controls that can prevent cold stress injury?

## SUPPORTING YOUR MENTAL HEALTH DURING FALL AND WINTER

The fall and winter seasons can be overwhelming for many of us, and it is common to experience feelings of stress, anxiety and/or depression. Reduced daylight, cold, wet weather, and seasonal traditions may all contribute to an increase in work and life demands. Seasonal affective disorder (SAD), a type of depression that has a seasonal pattern, is also prevalent this time of year. Approximately 15% of Canadians will report at least a mild case of SAD in their lifetime.

It is important to monitor your mental and physical health throughout the change in seasons. Take signs and symptoms of SAD seriously because it can get worse if left untreated. Untreated mental health challenges can inhibit our ability to focus and concentrate, and lead to excessive fatigue, all of which increase the risk of workplace injuries and accidents.

An individual may experience the following issues:

- Social withdrawal;
- Problems with performance and behaviour;
- Unhealthy coping mechanisms such as increased substance use.



Practicing self-care, reaching out to professional support, and connecting with family, friends and colleagues may help us better manage the challenges associated with this time of year.

## SOCIAL CONNECTIONS SUPPORT PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), when people are socially connected and have stable and supportive relationships, they are more likely to make healthy choices and to have better mental and physical health outcomes. They are also better able to cope with hard times, stress, anxiety, and depression. Because of this, it may be especially beneficial to build and maintain positive social connections throughout the fall and winter.

In addition to supporting our physical and mental health, having social connection and supportive relationships at work can help us to feel happier throughout the day and make our tasks seem more enjoyable. Small actions like sharing a smile, saying hello or checking in with each other, can make a big difference — especially on challenging days.

## BUILDING SOCIAL CONNECTIONS THROUGH EMPLOYEE RESOURCE GROUPS

One approach to building social connections at work is through joining or starting an employee resource group (ERG). ERGs are voluntary, employee-led groups that come together around shared identities and experiences and are recognized as a best practice to support an inclusive workplace. ERGs provide a space for City staff from marginalized groups to connect for mutual support, social connection and networking. ERGs are open to all staff—unionized, exempt, temporary, auxiliary, permanent, full or part time.

The City currently has several ERGs, supported by the Equity Office, that are open for staff to join. A few examples include:

- Indigenous ERG
- Black Staff ERG
- Trans, Gender diverse, Non-binary ERG
- South Asian Canadian Staff ERG
- Staff with Disabilities ERG
- Caregivers ERG

Managers and Supervisors play an important role in helping staff access relevant ERGs. As much as operationally feasible, staff should be supported in adjusting schedules to accommodate meetings and/or have workstation access set up for virtual participation.

The City Manager has approved the following guidelines to enable staff participation:

- ERG members can spend up to two hours per month in meetings, consultations and events.
- ERG facilitators can spend up to four hours per month, including time for planning and trainings.

Learn more by scanning the QR code or contacting the Equity Office at [equityoffice@vancouver.ca](mailto:equityoffice@vancouver.ca).



## RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO SUPPORT YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) is a widely recommended approach for managing anxiety, depression, and SAD. CBT helps individuals understand their thoughts, moods, and feelings while developing effective coping strategies. CBT is available to all City staff through our Employee Family Assistance Program, alongside coaching, counselling, Trauma Care and Depression Care.

Call 1-800-663-1142 to request support or visit [Homeweb.ca](http://Homeweb.ca) to access a variety of resources, including Homewood's Online CBT program Sentio.

- ✓ [Mental health and well-being resources](#)
- ✓ [Elder in residence program](#)
- ✓ [Community mental health resources](#)



## MANAGERS/SUPERVISORS DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING WITH YOUR TEAM

- What are some common mental health challenges experienced in the fall and winter?
- How do social connections benefit our physical and mental health?
- What is an employee resource group (ERG)?

Safety Talk Sign-in Sheet

<b>Business Unit:</b>	<b>Worksite:</b>
<b>Department:</b>	<b>Date</b>

**Topics Discussed:**

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**Record of those attending:**

<b>NAME (Please print clearly)</b>	<b>Initials</b>	<b>NAME (Please print clearly)</b>	<b>Initials</b>

**Absent:**

<b>NAME (Please print clearly)</b>	<b>Initials</b>	<b>NAME (Please print clearly)</b>	<b>Initials</b>

**Comments/Suggestions/Action Items**

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Delivered By: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Save records of:

Safety talk sign in sheets in your department’s VanDocs **Safety Training Program Records** folder in 07-4000-40.  
**Or** your meeting minutes that include safety talks in your department’s VanDocs **Staff Meeting Records** folder in 01-2500-10 **Or** the TrackIt application, if your group uses TrackIt.