

## **Safety Lessons Learned—Boardwalk Construction**

*“Lessons Learned” is a proven method of sharing important safety messages. Based upon real-life incidents, Lessons Learned examines root causes of why an accident or injury happened, and identifies corrective actions or mitigation to reduce the chance of future accidents. Lessons Learned does not identify people by name, nor is it finger-pointing or a way to place blame. It is an honest assessment of a chain of events that helps us find proactive ways to keep us all safer, healthier, and out on the Trail.*

**The Activity:** Boardwalk construction is a common activity along the Ice Age Trail, and we don’t normally think of it as a particularly dangerous volunteer job. However, here is an Ice Age Trail example of someone getting injured while helping to construct a boardwalk, and some Lessons Learned that we should all keep in mind on future projects:

**What Happened:** The volunteer was carrying materials to a boardwalk construction site, where the ground was wet and muddy. Some of the boardwalk frames had been pre-fabricated, and were placed on the ground over the wet area, awaiting their final placement. Deck boards were lined up on some of the frame sections, but were not yet screwed down or otherwise secured in place. The volunteer saw a chance to walk over the wet, muddy area on what he thought was safe footing. He stepped onto an unsecured deck board, it tipped up, and he twisted his knee when his leg fell through to the ground.

**The Lessons Learned:** There are a number of takeaways we should all keep in mind when working on or near boardwalk projects. A partial list includes:

- Situational Awareness—basically staying engaged with our surroundings and taking the time to truly “see” what we are looking at (like that section of boardwalk that isn’t pedestrian ready). Lesson #6 of *Trail Safe!* is found at [www.nps.gov/iatr](http://www.nps.gov/iatr), and gives a good overview of Situational Awareness
- Communication—if we know we may need to line up some unsecured deck boards during the project, good communication to others is critical so everyone knows what the temporary hazard will be. For more self-study on Effective Communication, please review *Trail Safe!* Lesson #8
- Engineering—when a known hazard exists, it’s always best to mitigate it by engineering changes. For loose decking on a boardwalk, that could be as simple as flagging off the boardwalk approaches to keep unsuspecting people from taking that final misstep

Thank you to everyone for not only building and caring for the Ice Age National Scenic Trail, but for also working together to keep each other safe and healthy along the way. Be Trail Safe!