



Safety Alert

Tips for Working Outside or in Cold Environments



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Winter weather can expose outdoor workers to occupational illnesses such as frostbite, hypothermia, and cold stress, all of which can cause significant injury. Additional illnesses such as trench foot and chilblains are also possible. It's important to monitor the conditions and make the right decisions based on the conditions. Consider the following to help keep employees safe in cold environments:

1. Provide **cold stress training** that includes information about worker risk, prevention and symptoms. Multiple training modules are available on Streamery; check with your Strategic Comp Loss Prevention Consultant if you need your company's login information.
2. Know the **symptoms of cold stress**: reddening skin, tingling, pain, swelling, leg cramps, numbness, and blisters.
3. Select the **proper PPE**. Dress properly; wear at least three layers of loose-fitting clothing, insulated gloves and boots, and cover your head. Stay dry and pack extra clothes, because moisture can increase heat loss from the body.
 - **Layered Clothing:** Use a three-layer system:
 - Base Layer: Consider moisture-wicking materials like polypropylene to keep sweat away from your skin.
 - Middle Layer: Use insulating materials like fleece or wool to retain body heat.
 - Outer Layer: Windproof and waterproof materials will help to protect against the elements.
 - **Insulated Gloves and Mittens:** Hands are particularly vulnerable to cold. Use insulated gloves or mittens, and consider using hand warmers for extra warmth.
 - **Thermal Socks and Insulated Boots:** Wear wool or synthetic socks to keep your feet warm and dry. Insulated, waterproof boots are essential for maintaining warmth and preventing frostbite.
 - **Head and Face Protection:** A good winter hat, balaclava, or neck gaiter can protect your head, ears and face from the cold. These areas are prone to frostbite, so it's important to keep them covered.



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- **Footwear:** Waterproof, slip-resistant boots are crucial for icy surfaces. Look for boots with good insulation and a waterproof liner to keep your feet dry and warm.
 - **Hand and Toe Warmers:** These small, portable heat packs can be a lifesaver in extremely cold conditions. They provide additional warmth for your extremities.
 - **Equipment Maintenance:** Ensure all your equipment is in good working condition and designed for cold weather use. This includes checking that tools can be operated without removing gloves or mittens.
4. Take frequent breaks in warm, dry areas. Drink warm liquids.
 5. Monitor the weather and use a mobile weather app to check the weather and understand if harsh winter weather is expected. OSHA standards generally advise that nonemergency construction work should cease when temperatures hit -30° to -34°F or below with more than 10-20 mph winds.

Taking preventive measures and making sure that personal protective equipment is suitable and available to your teams can help to prevent injuries and illnesses such as cold stress and frostbite. For more information on winter workplace safety, please contact your Strategic Comp Loss Prevention Consultant.

