



SAFETY UNLIMITED, INC.

Weekly Safety Meeting

Winter is Coming

It's probably happened to you more than one once. You're out in the field on a cloudy day when suddenly, cool gusts of wind blow your way. Before long, a biting cold creeps inside your body and you end up shivering on the job. Because you did not expect this sudden change in the weather, you end up all cold and possibly even sick later.

Changing weather is often nature's way of telling you that winter is on its way. Whether you like it or not, it can happen while you're on the job. The best you can do is prepare for this phenomenon. After all, when you're uncomfortable, you're more at risk of making mistakes and having accidents.

Working outside in the winter can be a dirty job, but many of us have to do it. Are you ready for winter work?

Anyone working in a cold environment may be at risk of cold stress.

Prolonged exposure to freezing or cold temperatures may cause serious health problems such as trench foot, frostbite, and hypothermia.

In extreme cases, including cold water immersion, exposure can lead to death.

Identifying Hazards:

It is very important to know the symptoms of frostbite and hypothermia so that you can do something before it is too late. Frostbite can occur from being in a cold area or from touching an object whose temperature is below freezing.

In many cases, people don't have any idea that it's happening. That's why you have to be familiar with the symptoms.

Frostbite victims usually start by feeling uncomfortably cold, then numb. Sometimes they also get a tingling or aching feeling, or a brief pain.

Hypothermia can also take you by surprise because you can get it even when the temperature is above freezing. Windy conditions, physical exhaustion, and wet clothing can all make you prone to hypothermia. With hypothermia, you first feel cold, then pain in the extremities. You'll shiver, which is how the body tries to raise its temperature.

Other symptoms include numbness, stiffness (especially in the neck, arms, and legs), poor coordination, drowsiness, slow or irregular breathing and heart rate, slurred speech, cool skin, and puffiness in the face. As you can see, many of these symptoms are not unusual and could mean different things.

But if you're exposed to very cold conditions, take them seriously and take steps to relieve them.

Precautions for Exposure to Cold:

Prolonged exposure to cold, wet, and windy conditions, even when temperatures are above freezing, can be dangerous. Extreme cold conditions exist when the equivalent (wind) chill temperature is at or below -25° F (-32 °C).

The best way to deal with cold problems is to prevent them in the first place. The most sensible approach is to limit exposure to cold, especially if it's windy or damp. If you know you're going to be in cold conditions, don't bathe, smoke, or drink alcohol just before going out.

When working in cold weather, employers and workers should take simple precautions, such as those listed below:

- Wear several layers of clothing rather than one thick layer.
- Wear gloves and a warm wool hat or a helmet liner under the hard hat because 40 percent of a person's body heat can be lost from an uncovered head; remember to cover your ears.
- Wear synthetic or cotton clothing next to the skin to wick away sweat.
- Wear warm footwear with one or two pairs of warm socks; footwear should not fit too tightly because it will restrict blood flow and cause more harm than good.
- Wear a scarf or facemask in cold windy weather.
- Take frequent short breaks in a warm shelter to allow the body to warm up.
- Avoid exhaustion or fatigue because energy is needed to keep muscles warm.
- Drink warm, sweet beverages and avoid drinks with caffeine or alcohol.
- Eat warm, high calorie food such as pasta dishes.
- Workers who take certain medications, are in poor physical condition, or suffer from illnesses such as diabetes, high blood pressure, or cardiovascular disease are at increased risk and should therefore check with a doctor for additional advice. Very cold temperatures, like very hot ones, can be hazardous to your health. Proper dress and some sensible practices can prevent a lot of the problems associated with cold weather. In addition, knowing the symptoms of danger and how to treat them can keep problems that do occur from becoming disasters.

Did you know that 70 % of deaths during snow or ice storms occur in vehicles? It pays to carry blankets or sleeping bags, matches, candles, a snow shovel and sandbags, a flashlight, and non-perishable food such as cereal bars, in case a winter storm sidelines you in your vehicle.

DON'T BE "LEFT OUT IN THE COLD"...PRACTICE WINTER SAFETY!!

