



Respond. Work Practices and Controls

Outdoor work requires proper preparation, especially in severe winter weather conditions. Although OSHA does not have a specific standard that covers working in cold environments, employers have a responsibility to provide workers with employment and a place of employment which are free from recognized hazards, including winter weather related hazards, which are causing or are likely to cause death or serious physical harm to them.

Safe work practices and engineering controls can be effective in reducing the risk of cold stress. Controls and practices can vary from industry to industry, so be sure those that you implement are relevant to the work that you and your employees are doing in the colder weather. Some examples may include:

- Radiant heaters used to warm workplaces like outdoor security stations
- Shield work areas from drafts or wind to reduce wind chill
- Aerial lifts or ladders can be used for safely applying de-icing materials to roofs, to protect workers from the hazard of falling through skylights
- Scheduling maintenance and repair jobs for warmer months
- Scheduling jobs that expose workers to the cold weather in the warmer part of the day
- Avoiding exposure to extremely cold temperatures when possible
- Limiting the amount of time spent outdoors on extremely cold days
- Using relief workers to assign extra workers for long, demanding jobs
- Providing warm areas for use during break periods
- Providing warm liquids (no alcohol) to workers
- Monitoring workers who are at risk of cold stress
- Monitoring the weather conditions during a winter storm, having a reliable means of communicating with workers and being able to stop work or evacuate when necessary
- Acclimatizing new workers and those returning after time away from work by gradually increasing their workload, and allowing more frequent breaks in warm areas, as they build up a tolerance for working in the cold environment
- Having a means of communicating with workers, especially in remote areas
- Knowing how the community warns the public about severe weather: outdoor sirens, radio, and television
- If you are notified of a winter storm watch, advisory or warning, follow instructions from your local authorities
- Provide and/or require the use of cold weather PPE



SAFETY REMINDER

Stay dry in the cold because moisture or dampness, e.g. from sweating, can increase the rate of heat loss from the body.