



Staying Warm when Working Outside

Are you doing enough to stay warm and safe while working during the winter months? As the days get shorter, chilly conditions that bring wind, freezing rains, and snow, make it harder to keep your body warm. If you will be working out in the cold this winter, you should be aware of the hazards involved and know how to protect yourself and your co-workers from exposure to cold temperatures.

Keep in mind that: **LOW TEMPERATURES + WIND+ WETNESS = Winter Injuries and Illnesses.** These are a few simple safety tips you should remember when working in the cold:

- Dress for the conditions you will be exposed to. Keep warm by layering clothing to keep moisture away from your body. Dressing in layers also lets you adjust to changing temperatures.
- Stay warm by working actively at your job. Body movements burn calories and warm the body. When you stop moving, the body quickly begins to cool off.
- Don't overexert yourself. Your body is already working hard to keep you warm. Take breaks in a warm area whenever possible.
- Refuel your body with warm drinks and hot meals. Following these safety tips is critical to preventing frostbite and hypothermia. When the body is unable to warm itself, these serious cold-related illnesses and injuries can occur, leading to permanent tissue damage and death.

Frostbite occurs when layers of skin and other tissue freeze. The skin becomes pale, hard, and numb. Frostbite usually occurs in the fingers, hands, toes, feet, ears, and nose--all the small extremities we sometimes forget to protect. When you dress for winter, remember to wear gloves to protect fingers and hands. Wear two layers of socks to keep your feet and toes warm. Remember to cover your ears and nose. If you wear a hat or a face mask, make sure that it doesn't compromise your hard hat's ability to protect your head.

Another winter hazard is hypothermia. This condition occurs when the body's core temperature drops below 95° Fahrenheit. Signs of hypothermia may include severe shivering, fatigue, slurred speech, clumsy movement, and confused behavior. This condition is a medical emergency and requires immediate attention. Call 911 and move the victim to a warm, dry area. Remove any wet clothing and wrap him or her in a blanket. In cold weather, expect the worst that winter has to offer.

SAFETY REMINDER

When working in cold weather, use the buddy system. Working in pairs, one worker can recognize dangerous symptoms in another and act to save a co-worker's life.