

Published: October 23, 2019

## Toolbox Talk – Working in Cold Weather

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**Date** \_\_\_\_\_ **Company Name** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Supervisor** \_\_\_\_\_ **Job Name** \_\_\_\_\_

As the seasons change, you should prepare your employees for working in cold weather. Though it may be obvious that low temperatures require special consideration, it may not be easy to gauge exactly how and when to protect oneself against the elements. Employees working outdoors face the risk of hypothermia, frostbite, and impaired sensory awareness. Additionally, snow and ice increase the risk of falls and struck by/caught between accidents. Use this toolbox talk to help your employees adequately protect themselves and one another in the winter months.

### Guidelines for Discussion:

Cold weather conditions pose unique hazards to workers. This is especially true on days with low wind chill temperatures. Wind chill is the effect of wind and low temperatures on the internal body temperature (lower wind chill temperatures place you at risk for frostbite and hypothermia). Essentially, you need to be especially wary on days that are very cold and very windy. The following chart, provided by the National Weather Service, is used to calculate the frostbite time for exposed skin in relation to windchill

Employers and employees should take extra measures to protect themselves against the cold, such as:

- Wearing several layers of clothing rather than one thick layer. Multiple layers of clothing keep you warmer, because warm air becomes trapped between the layers of fabric and adds insulation.
- Wearing synthetic or cotton clothing for your innermost layer. This will absorb sweat.
- Wearing a waterproof outer layer on rainy or snowy days.
- Covering the ears, wearing gloves, and using a warm hat or helmet liner under your hard hat. In cold conditions, it is especially important to protect your hands, ears, and head.
- Wearing a scarf or face mask in low windchill temperatures. On days like this, it is especially important to cover your face and protect from frostbite.
- Wearing warm footwear with one or two pairs of thick socks. The layers of socks provide cushioning and insulation around your feet. If you tie your boots too tightly, this will actually limit your blood flow and cause you to retain less heat.
- Taking frequent, short breaks in warm shelter. This is necessary to replenish your body heat and to avoid exhaustion. If you are fatigued, your body will not have enough energy to keep your muscles and extremities warm.
- Drinking warm beverages and avoiding drinks with caffeine or alcohol. Caffeine and alcohol actually impair your body's heat-producing mechanisms, which causes your body's internal temperature to drop.
- Eating warm, high-calorie foods. In cold weather, your body needs more fuel to maintain itself.
- Workers taking medication, in poor physical condition, or suffering from chronic illnesses/conditions (such as diabetes or high blood pressure) should speak with a doctor before working in cold conditions.

If an employee is concerned about his health while working outdoors in the cold, he should immediately communicate with his supervisor and take a break in warm shelter. Causes for concern include numbness in the face or extremities, excessive shivering, slurred speech, slow breathing, weak pulse, lack of coordination, drowsiness, confusion, and loss of consciousness. These symptoms are all indicative of hypothermia. Often, it is easier to detect the above symptoms in a co-worker than it is to detect them in oneself (as they come on gradually). In extreme cold, employees should look out for one another and report any causes for concern.

Safety Recommendations: \_\_\_\_\_

Job Specific Topics: \_\_\_\_\_

**Attendees**

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