



Toolbox Talk

Topic: Cold Weather

Cold weather can be very dangerous and possibly fatal without the proper precautions. Working in cold weather can reduce dexterity and productivity. Supervisors should understand employees may need to take breaks to warm up and personal breaks may be longer due to clothing layers.

Insulated gloves or glove liners are recommended to prevent frostnip on fingers. Winter coats, hats, gloves and related cold-weather equipment do not fall into the same PPE category as eye safety or fall protection. “There is no OSHA requirement for employers to provide workers with *ordinary* clothing, skin creams, or other items, used solely for protection from weather, such as winter coats, jackets, gloves, parkas, rubber boots, hats, raincoats, ordinary sunglasses, and sunscreen (29 CFR 1910.132(h)(4)). Regardless of this, many employers provide their workers with winter weather gear such as winter coats/jackets and gloves.”

Employees must come to work prepared for the elements and it’s recommended they keep extra layers or a change of clothing in their vehicles.

Ask yourself these questions:

1. What are the common symptoms of hypothermia?
2. What should you do if someone is suffering from hypothermia?
3. Which kind of clothing material is best for insulating the body?

Request your crew to identify five hazards and precautions associated with cold weather.

Hazards	Precaution
Hypothermia	Wear warm clothing with a base layer. Cover head, face and neck as much as possible. Take short breaks to warm up regularly.
Frostbite	Wear warm clothing and protect fingers with insulated gloves. Don’t touch metal objects with bare hands. Wear waterproof and insulated boots.
Slips, trips and falls	Clear walkways and work areas – lay salt or urea on icy areas. Wear clothing that does not restrict vision and avoid walking with materials in both hands.
Shorter days (less sunlight)	Plan start/stop times with sunlight and have lighting available. A headlamp or work light may be needed during the day. Drive defensively.
Dehydration	Drink plenty of water and wear layers of clothing. Avoid too much caffeine as it can cause dehydration.

Source: OSHA – Winter Storms – Plan. Equip. Train. https://www.osha.gov/dts/weather/winter_weather/beprepared.html

