

Safety Blast

Working in Inclement Weather

Winter weather can expose outdoor workers to frostbite, hypothermia, and cold stress, all can be fatal. It is important to know the wind chill temperature to better prepare and perform the work safely.

Best Practices to Stay Safe in Cold Weather:

- Know the symptoms of cold stress; reddening skin, tingling, pain, swelling, leg cramps, numbness, and blisters.
- Dress properly; wear at least three layers of loose-fitting clothing, insulated gloves and boots, and cover your head.
- Monitor your physical condition and that of your coworkers.
- Stay dry and pack extra clothes; moisture can increase heat loss from the body.
- Take frequent breaks in warm, dry areas.
- Drink warm liquids.



What is Cold Stress? Cold stress occurs by driving down the skin temperature, and eventually the internal body temperature. When the body is unable to warm itself, serious cold-related illnesses and injuries may occur, and permanent tissue damage and death may result.



- Increased wind speed causes heat to leave the body more rapidly (wind chill effect).
- Wetness or dampness, even from body sweat, also facilitates heat loss from the body.

Types of cold stress include trench foot, frostbite, and hypothermia.

How to Dress for the Cold - Dressing properly is extremely important to preventing cold stress.

- Wear at least three layers of loose-fitting clothing. Layering provides better insulation.
 - Inner layer - wool, silk or synthetic (polypropylene) to keep moisture away from the body.
 - Middle layer - of wool or synthetic to provide insulation even when wet.
 - Outer layer - wind and rain protection layer that allows some ventilation to prevent overheating.
- Tight clothing reduces blood circulation. Warm blood needs to be circulated to the extremities. Insulated coat/jacket (water resistant if necessary)
- Knit mask to cover face and mouth (if needed)
- Hat that will cover your ears as well. A hat will help keep your whole body warmer. Hats reduce the amount of body heat that escapes from your head.
- Insulated gloves (water resistant if necessary), to protect the hands
- Insulated and waterproof boots to protect the feet

Discussion Points:

- What are the signs of Cold Stress?
- What causes cold stress and how do you prevent it?
- What is your protocol for working in inclement weather?

