



Staying Safe in Winter Conditions

Introduction

Cold weather creates hazards for all employees, not just outdoor crews. When temperatures fall, risks increase on jobsites, in shops, around office buildings, and on the road. Slips and falls, cold stress, loss of traction, reduced visibility, and longer braking times all become more common. This is a good time to slow down, prepare properly, and stay focused on how changing conditions can impact safety.

Cold Weather Hazards for Outdoor Workers

Workers outside face the highest risk because cold temperatures affect the body quickly.

- Cold stress can lead to hypothermia, frostbite, and reduced dexterity.
- Wind increases heat loss and makes cold effects more severe.
- Wet conditions pull heat from the body faster than dry cold.
- Heavy PPE and layered clothing reduce mobility and can increase risk of strain.

Prevention Tips

- Wear appropriate thermal layers, gloves, hats, and waterproof outerwear.
- Take warm-up breaks in heated areas.
- Stay dry. Change wet clothing immediately.
- Drink warm fluids and eat high-energy foods.
- Use the buddy system to spot early symptoms of cold stress.

Cold Hazards in Shops and Garages with Open Doors

Many shops lose large amounts of heat when bay doors stay open. Workers may not consider these areas “outdoors,” but temperatures can drop quickly.

- Cold air reduces dexterity, increasing the risk of hand injuries when using tools.
- Concrete floors become cold and slippery when moisture freezes.
- Workers entering and exiting warm-to-cold zones may fog safety glasses and lose visibility.

Prevention Tips

- Limit the amount of time bay doors remain open when possible.
- Use floor dry or mats in areas where moisture collects.
- Wear insulated gloves designed for tool handling.
- Allow safety glasses to acclimate to prevent fogging.



Slippery Walking Surfaces for All Employees

Icy sidewalks, wet entries, frozen parking lots, and condensation inside buildings are major causes of employee injuries. Office workers are often the most at risk because they do not expect hazards in their work area.

- Hidden black ice increases slip potential.
- Water or snow tracked indoors creates slick tile and concrete surfaces.
- Rushing increases fall risk.

Prevention Tips

- Walk slowly, take short steps, and use handrails.
- Wear slip-resistant shoes.
- Wipe footwear thoroughly when entering buildings.
- Clear icy or wet areas immediately so they don't catch someone off guard.

Driving Hazards in Cold Weather

Cold weather changes road conditions fast. Even a light freeze or cold rain can create dangerous driving conditions.

- Black ice is common on bridges, shaded areas, and overpasses.
- Stopping distances increase significantly on wet or icy pavement.
- Vehicle windows fog quickly, reducing visibility.
- Low temperatures reduce tire pressure and can affect handling.

Prevention Tips

- Reduce speed and increase following distance.
- Clear frost, fog, and ice from all windows before moving.
- Check tire pressure frequently and maintain manufacturer recommended psi.
- Keep emergency supplies, warm clothing, and a phone charger in your vehicle.

Final Reminder

Cold weather affects every employee. Whether you work outdoors, in a shop, in an office, or on the road, staying alert to slippery surfaces, cold exposure, and reduced visibility protects you and everyone around you. Take your time, dress properly, and stay aware of your surroundings.