



When working in construction, being outside for long periods is part of the job. During the winter months, outdoor work can really be a challenge – as sometimes, temperatures can get quite low. These types of working conditions can lead to cold stress since your work environment becomes naturally cooled. There's usually a lot more wind which can take heat away from your body. Snow and rain can make your clothing wet as well. Cold stress can lead to hypothermia and occurs when internal body temperatures get too cold, and the body can't warm itself. It usually happens slowly – and workers may not even realize they have been affected by the cold weather.

### 7 Cold Weather Safety Tips:

#### 1. Listen to the weather forecast

- Check the weather forecast before going out
- Listen for a wind chill warning
- Warnings are based on local climate and are issued when significant wind chills are expected

#### 2. Plan Ahead

- Develop a cold weather safety plan in advance to ensure that safety concerns are addressed in colder temperatures or when the wind chill is significant
- For example, schools could hold recess indoors, outside workers could schedule warm-up breaks, and those involved in winter recreation could reduce the amount of time they spend outdoors
- Ensure warm-up breaks and practices follow and meet all COVID-19 prevention health and safety guidelines, see site supervisor for specific questions

#### 3. Dress Warmly

- Dress in layers, with a wind resistant outer layer
- When it is cold, wear a hat, mittens or insulated gloves
- Keep your face warm with a scarf, neck tube or face mask
- Wear warm and waterproof footwear
- When it is very cold, or when the wind chill is significant, cover as much exposed skin as possible
- Your body's extremities, such as the ears, nose, fingers and toes lose heat the fastest
- For construction workers, ensure that your layers don't interfere with your PPE (personal protective equipment)

#### 4. Seek Shelter

- When the wind chill is significant, get out of the wind and limit the time you spend outside
- Develop a work/rest cycle to help fight off the effects of cold weather

#### 5. Stay Dry

- Wet clothing chills the body rapidly
- Remove outer layers of clothing or open your coat if you are sweating

#### 6. Keep Active

- If you are working outside or must be out in the elements, walking or running will help warm you by generating body heat

#### 7. Be Aware

- Watch for signs of frostbite and hypothermia – see below for more information
- Some people are more susceptible to the cold, particularly children, the elderly, those with circulation problems, and those with previous cold weather injuries
- The use of alcohol, tobacco and certain medications will increase your susceptibility to cold

### Hypothermia

Being cold over a prolonged period of time can cause a drop in body temperature. Watch for shivering, confusion, and loss of muscular control (e.g., difficulty walking). Warning: it can progress to a life-threatening condition where shivering stops, or the person loses consciousness and cardiac arrest may occur.

What to do if you notice symptoms for yourself or others you are with:

- Get medical attention immediately
- Lay the person down and avoid rough handling, particularly if the person is unconscious
- Get the person indoors
- Gently remove wet clothing
- Warm the person gradually and slowly, using available sources of heat

### Frostbite

A more severe condition, where both the skin and the underlying tissue (fat, muscle, bone) are frozen. Skin appears white and waxy and is hard to the touch. No sensation – the area is numb or tingling.

What to do if you notice symptoms for yourself or others you are with:

- Frostbite can be serious and can result in amputation. Get medical help!
- Do not rub or massage the area
- Do not warm the area until you can ensure it will stay warm
- Warm the area gradually; use body heat, or warm water (99°-104°)
- Avoid direct heat which can burn the skin.