

**SAFETY  
FIRST**

## SAFETY/ENVIRONMENTAL TOOLBOX TRAINING – WINTER WEATHER SAFETY

### SUPERVISOR INSTRUCTIONS:

- Use toolbox trainings to encourage safety / environmental discussions during monthly meetings with employees
- Maintain a copy of the employee sign-in sheet in your safety / environmental compliance binder as a record of training

There are many hazards associated with the winter season. As the temperature drops, the hazards increase, such as cold stress and the possibility of snow and ice accumulation on roads and pedestrian walkways. Be mindful during winter weather events, by being prepared and following these winter weather safety tips.

### **Cold Stress**

Employees who work outside during the winter months can be exposed to extremely cold and wet weather.

Under prolonged exposure to cold temperatures, the risk of developing serious injuries, such as hypothermia, frostbite or trench foot, increases. Understand the symptoms and follow these procedures to reduce your risk:

**Hypothermia** – a condition in which the body uses up its stored energy and can no longer produce heat. Can occur following prolonged exposure to cold temperatures. **Symptoms:**

- Shivering
- Fatigue
- Loss of coordination
- Confusion and Disorientation

**Frostbite** – an injury to the body that is caused by freezing, which most often affects the nose, ears, cheeks, chin, fingers, or toes. **Symptoms:**

- Reduced blood flow to the hands and feet
- Numbness
- Aching
- Tingling or stinging
- Bluish or pale, waxy skin

**Trench Foot** – an injury of the feet resulting from prolonged exposure to wet and cold conditions. Can occur at temperatures as high as 60°F if the feet are constantly wet. **Symptoms:**

- Reddening of the skin
- Numbness
- Leg cramps
- Swelling
- Tingling pain
- Blisters or ulcers
- Bleeding under the skin

### **Protect Yourself**

- ✓ Wear several layers of loose clothing for insulation – do not wear tight clothing because it will reduce blood circulation to the extremities;
- ✓ Wear waterproof, insulated boots to protect your feet and wear a hat to minimize the loss of body heat from your head;



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- ✓ Carry extra socks, gloves, hats, jacket, and a complete change of clothes;
- ✓ Limit the amount of time spent outdoors: perform work during the warmest part of the day, if possible, and take breaks in warm locations; and
- ✓ Keep hydrated with warm, caffeine-free liquids – caffeine will constrict the blood vessels.

### ***Winter Walking***

Don't let the winter weather get you down! Walking to and from buildings and parking lots can be very hazardous during the winter months. The type of surfaces encountered and the type of footwear worn can increase your risk of falling. Outdoor surfaces become more dangerous in winter, exposing you to slippery or sloped areas. When walking outdoors, reduce your risk of injury and keep the following in mind:

- Remain alert for icy areas and avoid curbs or other uneven surfaces;
- Wear shoes or boots that provide good traction and avoid those with smooth soles;
- When entering or exiting vehicles use the vehicle as a handhold for support;
- Always use the handrail when walking up and down the stairs and firmly plant your foot on each step;
- Use designated pathways that have been cleared of snow and ice;
- Slightly bend your knees and walk slowly on snow or ice covered walkways;
- Take short steps or shuffle like a penguin for stability;
- Avoid carrying large or bulky items and keep your hands out of your pockets – this will allow you to maintain your balance while walking;
- Walk flat-footed with your center of gravity directly over the feet; and
- Wear ice-cleats to increase traction and remember to remove them before going indoors.



### **Questions for Discussion**

- 1) True or False. Wearing tight clothing will reduce your risk of developing a cold stress injury.
- 2) True or False. When walking on snow or ice covered areas, you should walk slowly, take short steps or shuffle like a penguin.
- 3) True or False. If you notice a co-worker working outdoors with reddening of the skin and shivering, they may be suffering from prolonged exposure to cold temperatures.

Answers: 1) F, 2) T, 3) T

### **Credits**

Content source: "NIOSH Fast Facts: Protecting Yourself from Cold Stress". <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2010-115/pdfs/2010-115.pdf>.

Content source: "Winter Safety Tips". <https://www.ceiwc.com/safety-university/safety-tip-sheets/safety-tip-sheets/seasonal-safety/wintertime-safety.pdf>.

Image 1 source: Emory Report.

[http://www.emory.edu/EMORY\\_REPORT/stories/2010/12/take\\_note\\_inclement\\_weather\\_policy.html](http://www.emory.edu/EMORY_REPORT/stories/2010/12/take_note_inclement_weather_policy.html).

Image 2 source: The Warming Store. <http://ep.yimg.com/ay/yhst-11545572856523/everyday-ice-cleats-5.gif>.