



WINTER WORK SAFETY

When performing construction and other work during the winter season, be mindful of the weather, its effects on the body and proper actions to prevent serious injury, permanent tissue damage or even death. Employers should monitor the weather to keep track of forecasts.

Following are several tips to consider while working outdoors during the winter months:

- Require proper gear. Workers need to have the right clothing for severe weather, including boots, heavy coats, gloves and hats. Employers should require all workers to wear clothing that will keep them warm and dry to prevent hypothermia and frostbite. Also, shoes should have nonslip soles to prevent falling. Consider keeping extra clothing on hand should your clothing get wet.
- Protect your head, neck and ears. Up to 40 percent of body heat can be lost when the head is exposed.
- Wear the right gloves for the work you are doing. They should have enough insulation to keep you warm and prevent frostbite, but thin enough so you can feel what you are doing if you are manipulating controls or tools. Avoid putting your hands in your pockets to reduce the risk of falling or losing your balance in case you slip while walking on ice or snow.
- Keep your safety eyewear from fogging up in the cold. Use anti-fog coatings and wipes that are appropriate for your eyewear.
- Avoid alcohol, nicotine, caffeine and some medications that inhibit the body's response to the cold and can impair judgement. These items can increase your heart rate and may cause your blood vessels to constrict. Encourage workers to drink water.
- Warm up your vehicle to help reduce the moisture condensation on the inside of your car windows. Remember, though, not to warm up your vehicle in a closed area.
- After a winter storm, immediately report any downed power lines or broken gas lines in your area or workplace.
- Prepare and identify a warm break area for workers to retreat. It can be a heated trailer or a tent with portable heaters. Always follow proper safety procedures with heating devices.
- Before work begins, review the area to ensure no new hazards have formed while you were away. Common hazards are snow and ice accumulations or downed power lines and trees.
- Before work is started on a site, ensure that snow is removed, salt or sand is put down and large patches of ice are chipped away to greatly reduce the risk of injury.
- All work vehicles should be inspected to determine if they are fully functioning. Winter kits should be added to every vehicle including an ice scraper, snow brush, shovel, tow chain, flashlight with extra batteries, emergency flares, a blanket, snacks, and water.

Taking preventive action is your best defense against having to deal with extreme cold-weather conditions. Prepare in advance, observe safety precautions and reduce your risk of weather-related injury. Safety is being prepared.

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