

for *YOUR* HEALTH

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Cold Stress: Working Safely in Winter Weather

Winter adds its own hazards to your regular safety concerns, so help your employees work safely in winter weather by training them to recognize and protect against its hazards.

Cold stress can occur when the body is unable to warm itself. This can lead to tissue damage and possibly death. Four factors contribute to cold stress:

1. Cold air temperatures
2. High velocity air movement
3. Dampness of the air
4. Contact with cold water or surfaces

A cold environment forces the body to work harder to maintain its temperature. Cold air, water and snow all draw heat from the body. While below-freezing conditions and inadequate protection

can bring about cold stress, problems can also occur with much higher temperatures.

For example, when the air temperature of wind is 40°F (4°C) and its velocity is 35 mph, exposed skin receives conditions equivalent to the still-air temperature being 11°F (-11°C). Wet conditions also increase the hazards of cold temperatures beyond the actual thermometer reading.



Ways to protect against winter weather:

- Wear at least three layers of clothing:
 - 1 An outer layer, such as Gortex, to break the wind
 - 2 A middle layer of down or wool to absorb sweat and provide insulation
 - 3 An inner layer of cotton or synthetic weave to allow ventilation
- Wear a hat. A considerable amount of heat escapes the body from the head.
- Keep a change of dry clothing available in case work clothes become wet.
- Wear loose rather than tight clothing for better ventilation.
- Drink plenty of water to avoid dehydration.
- Schedule work during the warmer parts of the day.
- Take breaks out of the cold.
- Work in pairs.
- Avoid fatigue.
- Consume warm, high-calorie food.

