

WINTER WORK PREPAREDNESS

Good Preparation is Essential to Personal Safety When Preparing for Outdoor Work During the Winter



Frostbite and hypothermia are real concerns.

Skin can start to freeze at just 28 degrees Fahrenheit causing frostbite which can lead to blood clots, tissue damage and even gangrene. Fingers, toes, noses, ears, and cheeks are the most susceptible body parts. Protective clothing can help, but skin that is protected can also be subject to frostbite.

Hypothermia is caused by loss of body temperature and can lead to potentially fatal conditions. The symptoms include fatigue, nausea, confusion, lightheadedness and extreme sweating. Medical treatment must be sought immediately if frostbite or hypothermia is suspected to prevent serious health consequences.

Below are some tips on how to prepare for work during cold weather to help reduce risk:

- Wear gloves that are right for the job. Gloves should have sufficient insulation to create warmth while providing the dexterity required to perform functions of the job or related tasks.
- Dress in layers of lighter weight clothing which will provide more warmth than single layers of heavier clothing. If temperatures climb remove layers to prevent overheating and perspiration that could lead to hypothermia if conditions change. Wet clothing is as much as twenty times less warm than dry clothing.
- Wear proper hats and headgear, nearly half of body heat can be lost off the top of a bare head. Protect your ears as they are extremely susceptible to frostbite.
- Protect your face with masks that cover cheeks, chins and noses, especially during extreme cold or when wind chill increases risk. (Wind chill is the apparent temperature felt on exposed skin due to the combination of cold and wind.)
- Scarves or mufflers when used must be worn in such a fashion that they cannot be caught up in rotating equipment.
- Wear protective eyewear that is equipped with anti-fog coatings or prepare them with anti-fog wipes if necessary. (Eyewear not worn due to fogging leaves your eyes subject to injury.)
- Check that boots/shoes worn are designed to protect your feet from the cold and moisture and ensure that the tread on your footwear is made of material that will prevent slips on icy or wet surfaces. Use traction enhanced footwear, strap on cleats or spikes where needed to mitigate icy or slippery conditions.

Wear all winter gear when needed and as designed!