

Safety Bulletin



Preparation for Winter Weather

The onset of extreme weather can occur very quickly in the winter, and preparation is critical. Control measures for working in the cold must be implemented to protect workers during variable winter weather. First, identify all the potential hazards associated with extreme cold and weather for the work to be completed that could lead to injury, illness, or incident. The hazards should be assessed based on both the probability and the severity that a worker will be harmed or become ill and controls should be developed to mitigate the hazard.

The most effective strategies to protect workers are to implement control measures that eliminate or minimize a workers' exposure to extreme cold and winter hazards. The hierarchy of controls can be used to select the most appropriate control measures.

The hierarchy of controls is a step-by-step approach to eliminating or reducing the risk of workplace hazards. The hierarchy of controls prioritizes the controls from the most effective level of protection to the least effective level of protection: elimination, substitution, engineering controls, administrative controls and personal protective equipment.

ELIMINATION

Where possible,

- Avoid or limit demanding work in extreme cold
- Avoid driving or travelling during extreme winter events
- Have workers perform their work in a heat-controlled environment
- Reschedule work performed outdoors when temperatures are milder
- Schedule outdoor preventive or planned work during the warmer times of the day (typically mid-day)
- Completely clear all walking paths of snow and/or ice

SUBSTITUTION

Consider,

- Can the work be done in a different environment?

ENGINEERING CONTROLS

Where possible,

- Improve heating in work areas*
- Provide heated shelters for rests and breaks*
- Use equipment and tools that are designed so they can be safely operated while wearing gloves or other winter clothing
- Maintain work vehicles, use snow tires and functioning heaters

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- Keep a winter emergency kit in the vehicle (portable phone charger/battery, water and snacks, blankets, a small shovel, flash light, kitty litter or sand, hazard triangles or led flashers, extra clothes, first aid kit and jumper cables at a minimum)

*Do not use unvented portable gas heaters in indoor settings as it can lead to harmful levels of carbon monoxide and other harmful combustion products.

ADMINISTRATIVE CONTROLS

- Use weather surveillance procedures to identify upcoming cold events and to detect the sudden onset of cold events
- Have emergency plans and procedures in place to respond to extreme cold events
- Train workers on:
 - How to identify health effects of cold stress in themselves and others
 - What to do if experiencing cold stress (or identify someone experiencing cold stress)
 - First aid procedures, etc.
 - What to do in the event of an emergency caused by extreme cold and winter weather
- Adjust the pace of work to avoid overheating (sweating) then cooling
- Appropriate use of winter weather clothing and PPE for working in the cold
- Increase the frequency and length of rest breaks
- Complete thorough hazard assessments prior to beginning work. Be sure to include and review winter-specific hazards and their controls.

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

- Insulated PPE whenever possible
- Layer clothing to provide better insulation
- Protect your eyes to avoid cold/wind-related eye injuries
- Test PPE to ensure it is working properly and doesn't present additional hazards

Common Winter Workplace Hazards to Consider:

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| • Winter Driving | • Preventing trips and falls from hidden hazards under snow |
| • Work Zone Traffic Safety | • Down or damaged power lines or trees |
| • Shoveling Snow | • Cold Stress / Hypothermia |
| • Using powered equipment like snow blowers | • Frost Bite |
| • Clearing snow from roofs and working at heights | • Illnesses |
| • Preventing slips on snow and ice | • Low Light Conditions |