

SAFETY TIP



Winter Safety and Cold Stress

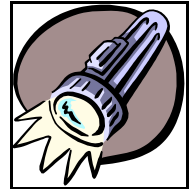


Winter can be a time to enjoy the holidays and watch the snowflakes fall, but winter harbors many hidden dangers that can seriously impact your health and safety. Many people work long hours in the cold while being exposed to extreme weather conditions. Cold temperatures can lead to hypothermia and frostbite, and snow removal can lead to many injuries. By following the safety tips below, you can minimize winter's dangers and enjoy all the festivities that the season has to bring.

Winter Nighttime Safety:

During the late fall and winter months, days quickly become shorter. Many workers begin and end their workday while it is dark outside. The tips below will help make the dark road to spring a safe one.

- Always carry a flashlight to see where you are walking, and while getting into your car. This will help you to avoid slips on black ice, and also makes you more visible to others.
- Use the buddy system when leaving work at night. There is safety in numbers, and it may help to discourage a mugger or attacker.
- Winterize your vehicle to make sure that it is ready for winter weather and nighttime travel. This includes, cleaning your windows and mirrors, refilling windshield washer fluid, replacing any burnt out light bulbs, and preparing an emergency kit in the event you become stranded.



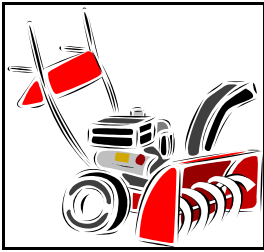
Snow Shoveling: Use caution when shoveling snow.

Snow shoveling can be a good source of aerobic exercise, but it can also be equally dangerous, especially for those that do a large amount of it as part of their work duties. Below, you will find ways to safely remove snow while benefiting from the exercise.

- If you are inactive or have a history of heart trouble, talk to your doctor before taking on the task of shoveling snow.
- Protect your back from injury by lifting correctly. Correct lifting includes lifting with your knees and keeping the load close to your body. It is also important to avoid twisting motions when moving; instead reposition your feet to a better position before dumping snow.
- Drink plenty of water while engaging in this rigorous outdoor activity. Dehydration is a winter issue just like it is in the summer months.
- Take it slow! Shoveling can raise your heart rate and blood pressure dramatically. Be sure to stretch out and warm up before taking on the task.
- Use a shovel with a small blade and take small scoops, especially when shoveling wet snow.



Using A Snow Thrower:



- Never wear scarves or other loose clothing that can become entangled in the snow thrower's moving parts.
- When moving the snow thrower, avoid awkward positions and twisting, as you can easily injure your back or slip on the icy pavement.
- NEVER place hands and feet inside the moving mechanical parts of the snow thrower while the engine is running, as the machine can seriously injure you.

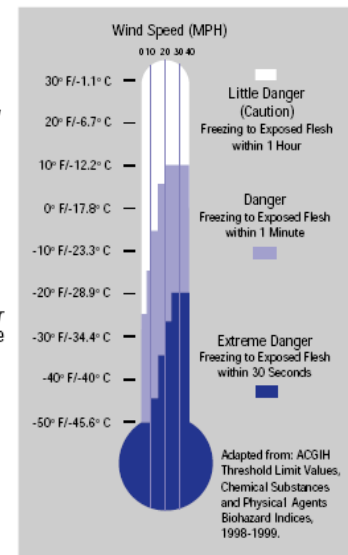
Cold Stress: Ways to avoid hypothermia and frostbite while at work.

- Perform work during the warmest part of the day.
- Take frequent short breaks in warm dry shelters to allow your body to warm up while working in the cold.
- Select the proper clothing for cold, wet, and windy conditions. Layer clothing to adjust for changing temperatures. Wear a hat and gloves, as well as thermal underwear with a material such as polypropylene to help wick the moisture away from the skin.
- If you are working in the cold and notice signs of cold injury, i.e. numbness and pain in extremities, STOP WORKING and get to a warm shelter to warm your body up. Frostbite is a medical emergency. If frostbite has set in, get medical treatment immediately!
- For employers, educate and train your workforce about cold-induced injuries and illnesses.

THE COLD STRESS EQUATION

LOW TEMPERATURE + WIND SPEED + WETNESS
= INJURIES & ILLNESS

When the body is unable to warm itself, serious cold-related illnesses and injuries may occur, and permanent tissue damage and death may result. Hypothermia can occur when *land temperatures are above freezing or water temperatures are below 98.6°F/37°C*. Cold-related illnesses can slowly overcome a person who has been chilled by low temperatures, brisk winds, or wet clothing.



Here's a Tip!

Remember, workers are at increased risk for frostbite and hypothermia when they have predisposing health problems, such as cardiovascular problems, diabetes, or high blood pressure.

Other Winter Safety Tips:

- Use rock salt or other ice-melt on walkways and stairs, to avoid slips and falls.
- If possible, carry a mobile phone to make emergency phone calls if you or someone you see becomes stranded in snow or ice.
- When driving in snow and ice, slow down and be respectful of other drivers and pedestrians.

Other Resources:

The Scoop on Snow Shoveling Safety, North Dakota State University <http://www.ext.nodak.edu/snow.htm>

Occupational Safety and Health Administration: <http://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3156.pdf#search='cold%20stress'>

National Safety Council: <http://www.nsc.org/library/facts/snowshov.htm>

Information abstracted from the Occupational Health and Safety Administration, North Dakota State University, and The National Safety Council.