

Cold Stress Tips for Employers and Workers



It's that time of year again, when winter weather exposes workers to cold temperatures, high winds, icy conditions and snow or sleet and thus to the risk of cold stress and dangerous conditions, such as frostbite and hypothermia.

So here are some cold stress tips from the CDC for employers:

- Schedule maintenance and repair jobs in cold areas for warmer months.
- Schedule cold jobs for the warmer part of the day.
- Reduce the physical demands of workers.
- Use relief workers or assign extra workers for long, demanding jobs.
- Provide warm liquids to workers and warm areas for use during breaks.
- Monitor workers who are at risk of cold stress.
- Provide cold stress training that includes information on:
 - Worker risk
 - Prevention
 - Symptoms
 - The importance of monitoring yourself and coworkers for symptoms
 - Treatment
 - PPE.

The CDC also recommends that workers follow these recommendations to protect themselves from cold stress:

- Wear several layers of loose clothing. Layering provides better insulation.
- Avoid tight clothing, which reduces blood circulation. Warm blood needs to be circulated to the extremities.
- When choosing clothing, be aware that bulky clothing may restrict movement, resulting in a hazardous situation.
- Make sure to protect the ears, face, hands and feet in extremely cold weather.
- Boots should be waterproof and insulated.
- Wear a hat; it'll keep your whole body warmer by reducing the amount of body heat that escapes from your head.
- Move into warm locations during breaks; limit time outside on very cold days.
- Carry cold weather gear, such as extra socks, gloves, hats, jacket, blankets, a change of clothes and a thermos of hot liquid.

- Include a thermometer and chemical hot packs in your first aid kit.
- Avoid touching cold metal surfaces with bare skin.
- Monitor your physical condition and that of your coworkers.

Here are additional resources from the OHS Insider that you can use to protect your workers from cold stress, including:

- A frostbite risk and control chart
- A handout on cold stress
- Cold Work Warm-up Break Schedule.