CrewSigned

Cold Weather Safety Toolbox Talk

5-minute read-aloud · Last reviewed November 24, 2026

Working outside in winter is hard on the body. When your body loses heat faster than it can make it, you are in cold stress, and that can lead to hypothermia, frostbite and other injuries. It does not have to be below zero. Wind, rain and sweat-soaked clothes can make a forty-degree day dangerous.

Hypothermia happens when your body temperature drops too low. It starts with shivering and feeling tired. Then come confusion, clumsy hands, slurred speech and slow breathing. As it gets worse, the shivering can stop, which is a very bad sign. The person may not realize what is happening. If you see these signs, get them somewhere warm, get wet clothes off, wrap them in dry blankets, and call 911 if they are confused or not shivering.

Frostbite is frozen skin and tissue, usually on fingers, toes, ears, nose and cheeks. Watch for numbness, tingling and skin that turns white, gray or waxy. Get the person warm, but do not rub the area and do not use a heater or hot water to thaw it, because numb skin burns easily. Get medical care.

Trench foot can happen even above freezing when feet stay wet and cold for a long time. Keep feet dry and change socks.

Dress in layers. An inner layer that wicks sweat, like wool or synthetic, a middle layer for warmth, and an outer layer that blocks wind and water. Avoid cotton next to your skin because it stays wet. Wear a hat or a hard hat liner, insulated gloves and waterproof boots. Bring spare socks and gloves.

Work smart in the cold. Take warm-up breaks in a heated area. Drink warm, sweet drinks and eat regularly, because your body needs fuel to make heat. Schedule the heaviest outdoor work for the warmest part of the day when we can. Watch your buddy for signs of trouble, and do not work alone in extreme cold.

Winter also brings ice, short days and slick roads. Clear and salt walkways, wear boots with good tread, use extra lighting, and give yourself extra time to drive. If we use portable heaters, they need proper ventilation because of carbon monoxide.

Discussion questions

1. Where can we warm up on this site, and how often should we be using it this week?
2. What are the early signs of hypothermia, and how would you spot them in a coworker?
3. What part of your winter gear gets wet first, and what spare do you keep with you?

OSHA standard

OSHA Winter Weather guidance
https://www.osha.gov/winter-weather

SOURCES

Cold Stress QuickCard (OSHA 3156): https://www.osha.gov/sites/default/files/publications/OSHA3156.pdf
Working Safely in Cold Weather: OSHA Alert: https://www.osha.gov/sites/default/files/publications/OSHA3982.pdf
NIOSH, Cold Stress and Workers: https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/cold-stress/about/index.html

This talk does not replace training that an OSHA standard requires. Scripts are based on OSHA and NIOSH publications and rewritten in plain language.

Safety Meeting Sign-In Sheet

TOPIC

Cold Weather Safety Toolbox Talk

COMPANY

JOB / SITE

DATE

TIME

PRESENTER

#	Printed name	Signature	Company / trade
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			
11			
12			
13			
14			
15			
16			
17			
18			

Skip the paper: run this talk and collect signatures on phones at crewsigned.com