Cold Comfort

Stay warm and safe

How cold is too cold? According to OSHA, cold stress can occur when the body is unable to warm itself. This can lead to tissue damage and possibly death. Four factors contribute to cold stress:

1. Cold air temperatures
2. High-velocity air movement
3. Dampness of the air
4. Contact with cold water or surfaces

A cold environment forces the body to work harder to maintain its temperature. Cold air, water, and snow all draw heat from the body. OSHA points out that while below-freezing conditions and inadequate protection can bring about cold stress, problems can also occur with much higher temperatures, even in the 50s, when coupled with rain and wind.

The most common cold-induced problems are hypothermia, frostbite, and trench foot.

Hypothermia occurs when body heat is lost faster than it can be replaced. When the core body temperature drops from the normal 98.6°F to around 95°F, symptoms generally begin. The person may begin to shiver and stomp the feet in order to generate heat. Workers may lose coordination, experience slurred speech, and fumble with items in their hands. The skin will likely be pale and cold. As the body temperature falls, symptoms will worsen and shivering will stop. At a body temperature of below 85°F, severe hypothermia will develop and the person may become unconscious; at 78°F, death can occur. Treatment depends on the severity of the hypothermia.

Frostbite occurs when the skin actually freezes and loses water. In severe cases, amputation of the frostbitten area may be required. Frostbite usually affects the extremities. The affected body part will be cold, tingling, stinging, or aching, followed by numbness. The skin turns red in color, then purple, then white, and is cold to the touch. In severe cases, there may be blisters.

Trench foot, or immersion foot, is caused when the feet are immersed in cold water at temperatures above freezing for long periods of time. It is similar to frostbite, but considered less severe. Symptoms include tingling, itching, or a burning sensation.
Priceless Eyesight

National Eye Care Month

Make sure you use the right equipment for the situation.

Safety Glasses:
- Are stronger and safer than regular glasses
- Protect against flying objects
- Don’t protect against hazardous fumes or gases

Safety Goggles:
- Protect against flying objects, sparks, splashes, and dust
- Generally offer better protection than safety glasses
- May be indirectly ventilated to keep out splashes and dust

Helmets:
- Protect head and neck against sparks, splashes, and intense light
- Resist heat and impact
- Must be worn with safety glasses or goggles

Face Shields:
- Protect face and neck against splashes, flying objects, heat, glare, and light
- Don’t offer full head protection
- Must be worn with safety glasses or goggles underneath

If you need prescription lenses, you may need to wear special eye protection. Contact lens wearers shouldn’t wear them for some jobs. Ask your supervisor.

New Year, New Vow

Make safety a full-time habit

January’s always a good time to recommit ourselves to various personal and professional commitments. Use this list to recommit to safety basics:

- Know the hazards of your job.
- Always follow safety rules and procedures.
- Use personal protective equipment (PPE) that’s assigned to you.
- Pay attention to safety training and apply what you learn on the job.
- Keep on the lookout for hazards, and keep asking yourself what could go wrong while you work.
- Eliminate or report any hazards you see right away.
- Pay attention to warning signs and do what they tell you.
- Know when you might be exposed to hazardous chemicals and take precautions to protect yourself.
- Read labels, warnings, material safety data sheets (MSDSs), and other safety information before you start a job.
- Practice good housekeeping at all times.
- Report any injury, illness, accident, or near miss to your supervisor immediately.

Remember, when it comes to safety, there’s no such thing as a dumb question. If you’re not sure about a potential hazard or how to do your job safely, ask your supervisor. Don’t perform a task unless you know how to perform it safely!