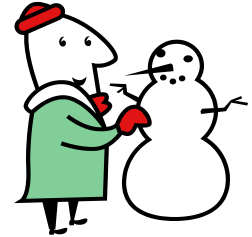


Working in Cold Weather Conditions

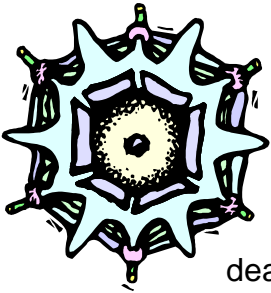
Cold weather conditions pose a challenge if your job requires you to work outside. Luckily, there are measures you can take to help brace for the cold, making sure your work performance does not suffer and protecting yourself from related illness.

Dangers of Cold Weather

Though it may be tempting to think that you can just "tough it out" or "power through it," there are distinct dangers associated with cold weather labor that you need to prepare for. The two most common of these are frostbite and hypothermia.



1. Frostbite typically affects the extremities, such as the hands and feet. A person's nose can also succumb to frostbite. Medline Plus, a service of the U.S. National Library of Medicine, describes the initial stages of frostbite as a "pins and needles' sensation." This is followed by numbness. In severe cases, frostbite can cause permanent damage to the skin.



2. Hypothermia is a very severe condition that occurs when your body is losing more heat than it can produce. The Mayo Clinic warns, "when your body temperature drops, your heart, nervous system and other organs cannot work correctly." The American Heart Association explains that heart failure causes most hypothermia-related deaths. Though hypothermia-related death is a real danger, EHS Today reports that the number of work-related deaths attributed directly to cold weather is only about four or five per year. Proper precautions should always be taken to avoid nonfatal tissue damage or a lengthy hypothermia recovery process.

Prevention Strategies

1. Your first line of defense against cold weather conditions is your clothing. Rather than relying solely on a thick jacket, layer multiple items for the best possible insulation. An American Heart Association article on cold weather dangers indicates that layering "traps air between layers, forming a protective insulation." Also, remember that much of your body's heat will be lost through your head, since it invariably must be exposed for breathing purposes and because a large amount of blood must circulate through your head to reach your brain. Do your best to cover your ears, face and neck with hats, masks and scarves.
2. Further prevention strategies involve basic safety advice such as using the "buddy system" to ensure that workers never go out into the cold alone. Additionally, keep yourself hydrated, preferably with warm liquids. Also make sure someone on the work crew has a cell phone handy to call for medical help if a laborer begins feeling cold-related pain or numbness.
3. Lastly, avoid getting wet at all costs. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) claims that body heat is lost 24 times faster when seek warm shelter immediately if your clothes get wet. and replace them with dry clothes rather than letting them



clothing is wet. Always Take off wet clothes air dry.