

Preventing Cold Stress

Volume 1 Fast 100 Issue 51C-1

Anyone working in a cold environment may be at risk for cold stress. This could include an indoor workplace like cold storage or an outdoor job in construction or agriculture. Prolonged exposure to cold and/or freezing temperatures while on the job may cause serious health problems such as trench foot, frostbite and hypothermia. In extreme cases, exposure to cold temperatures can lead to death.

*Although OSHA does not have a specific standard that covers working in cold environments, under the **Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSH Act) of 1970**, employers have a duty to protect workers from recognized hazards, including cold stress hazards, that are causing or likely to cause death or serious physical harm in the workplace.*

Risk factors for cold stress include:

- Overexposure to cold temperatures
- Increase wind speed, and the wind chill effect
- Wet clothing and/or wet skin
- Dressing improperly for the weather
- Exhaustion
- Health conditions such as high blood pressure, hypothyroidism, diabetes or asthma
- Poor physical conditioning
- Inadequate training on how to work safely in cold temperatures

IMPORTANT TIPS TO PREVENT COLD STRESS:

- Wear proper clothing for cold, wet and windy conditions.
- Take frequent short breaks in warm dry shelters.
- Schedule work for the warmest part of the day.
- Avoid exhaustion or fatigue.
- Keep extra clothing handy in case clothes get wet.
- Drink warm, sweet beverages and avoid drinks with caffeine or alcohol.
- Eat warm, high-calorie foods.
- Use the buddy system – work in pairs so that one worker can recognize danger signs.
- Stay dry in the cold because moisture or dampness, even from sweating, can increase the rate of heat loss from the body.

Not for resale or unauthorized redistribution. For all terms & conditions that apply, please visit www.weeklysafety.com.