



Winter Working

Audience: Site Operatives

Presenter: GHSEA, Site Manager, Trade Supervisors



The Risk

- Early indications of being affected by the cold include slower reaction times and a lengthening of the time it takes to complete tasks. Manual dexterity also decreases and more mistakes can be made.
- Workers are particularly at risk from cold when the ambient temperature is below 10°C; wind speed is a factor and can rapidly increase the adverse effects of the cold.
- When the body is exposed to cold temperatures, effects can include dehydration, numbness, shivering, frostbite, immersion foot and hypothermia. In very cold weather, workers can face two major health problems, hypothermia and frostbite.
- The risk of a slip, trip or fall is also significantly higher when snow and ice is present on site.



Working in Snow and Icy Conditions

- Site gantries and pedestrian walkways must be covered by a non-slip matting or gritted if ice and snow is expected.
- If ice or snow is present on site, work on ladders, scaffolds and roofs must be prohibited until the inclement weather conditions have passed.
- Operatives must navigate the site cautiously, ensuring that areas where ice and snow are present are avoided and report any ice or snow present on site gantries or pedestrian walkways to site management to allow them to make the areas safe before they are



Working in Cold Wet Weather

- Rheumatism can be brought on or aggravated by allowing joints and limbs to be cold and wet for long periods, treatment is difficult so prevention is best. Waterproof clothing which is big enough to allow adequate warm garments to be worn underneath should be worn (this especially applies to boots).
- Bronchitis is the development of a cold brought on by exposure to cold or damp. Once affected, it is easily caught again and can get worse until you are virtually disabled. Smoking makes the chance of catching it even greater.
- If working in water e.g. in a trench or other place where wading is necessary, even good boots and socks can eventually allow the feet to become blue and numb. Do not stand in water for too long and if possible, change socks for a dry warm pair at intervals.



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Working in Cold Dry Weather

- Working in intense cold can slow you down physically and mentally, reactions are slower and decision making over even simple things becomes harder. Hence, accidents are more likely.
- In extreme weather conditions, if possible, arrange a work rota system so that regular periods are spent out of the cold and wind.
- Hypothermia usually occurs when you can no longer maintain your body temperature at about 37°C. Shivering is usually the first sign, but some people do not seem to shiver. If you begin to feel cold “deep inside”, refer it to your Supervisor and take a short break in a warm place. Have a warm drink and a snack during your breaks.



Winter Weather PPE

Site management must ensure that operatives are wearing the correct PPE and cold weather clothing in order that they can work effectively outside.

Depending upon the work activity and weather conditions, this could include:

- A pair of safety boots that are warm and waterproof;
- A cold weather high visibility jacket;
- A full set of high visibility waterproofs;
- A cold weather hard hat liner (hoodies and bobble hats are not permitted to be worn under hard hats);
- Jumpers / sweat shirts to wear under a high visibility jacket;
- Cold weather socks;
- Thermal gloves;
- Neoprene wellington safety boots if the site is in the early stages of construction or very muddy; and
- Head torch.