

The cold temperatures and icy conditions that are often a part of Canadian winters can cause hazards at the workplace. Unlike heat illness, the effects of cold weather on workers are often an overlooked topic. These weather-related conditions can lead to serious and life-threatening situations if workers are not properly prepared.

# Winter Hazards

Date Discussed:

Signature:

Similar to the heat, you have to allow yourself to get acclimatized to the cold weather. The first day of the frigid weather can be challenging. It is best to start off very slowly and allow your body to get used to the weather. Dressing properly is extremely important to preventing cold stress. The type of fabric worn also makes a big difference. The following are accommodations for working in cold environments:

- ❄️ Wear at least three layers of loose-fitted clothing. An inner layer of wool, silk or synthetic to keep moisture away from the body. A middle layer of wool or synthetic to provide insulation even when damp. An outer layer of wind and rain protection that allows for some ventilation to prevent your body from overheating.
- ❄️ Wear a hat, this will help keep your head warm.
- ❄️ Wear insulated water-resistant gloves to keep your hands warm.
- ❄️ Wear insulated waterproof boots with one pair of thick socks or two pairs of thin socks.
- ❄️ If you get to hot at work, open your jacket.

## The dangers of working in a cold environment:

- ❄️ **Cold Stress** – Exposure to the cold can lead to frostbite and hypothermia.
- ❄️ **Hypothermia** – The body can no longer maintain its core temperature, causing persistent shivering, confusion, and poor coordination.
- ❄️ **Frostbite** – Parts of the body are exposed to extremely cold temperatures or come into contact with cold objects, causing the tissues to freeze.
- ❄️ **Slips and Falls** – Ice, snow, slush, wet surfaces, and mud can cause slips and falls. A slip on the ground can cost you weeks off work. A slip at height can cost you your life.

## Some safety tips to follow during the winter months:

- ❄️ Use proper engineering controls and safe work practices.
- ❄️ Give your workers frequent breaks in warm areas.
- ❄️ Include chemical hot packs in your first aid kit.
- ❄️ Schedule heavy work in the winter for only part of the day.
- ❄️ Monitor your own physical condition and that of your coworkers.
- ❄️ Drink plenty of water and have a warm sweet beverage on break.
- ❄️ Clean ice and snow from access areas and work platforms.
- ❄️ Keep some extra clothing handy in case you get to wet and need to change.
- ❄️ Use a buddy system; work in pairs so that one worker can recognize danger signs.
- ❄️ Watch where you are stepping and go slowly. Use sand or salt to prevent slips and falls.



### ! Discussions:

1. List some of the winter hazards within our working environment.
2. What will we do here at the workplace today to prevent being injured in cold weather?
3. Encourage a discussion by using real-life situations and ask if there are any questions.