

cold weather exposure in the workplace

For some, working in cold temperatures is a way of life. It is very important to stay safe when working in these conditions and to take precautions necessary to stay warm and healthy. It's also equally important to watch for slick or slippery conditions that could cause slips, trips, or falls. Here are a few tips to consider if you work outdoors during the cold winter months.

HOW TO PREVENT FROSTBITE AND HYPOTHERMIA WHEN WORKING OUTSIDE

- Cover exposed skin before stepping outside. When wind chills drop, exposed flesh can freeze quickly, leading to frostbite and hypothermia.
- Wear waterproof, thermal gloves, if your job allows. It's important to keep your hands protected and dry.
- Wear a hat to reduce the amount of body heat lost through your head.
- Pay attention to how your body reacts to the cold.
 - Signs of frostbite: Redness; pain; or unusually firm, waxy, or numb skin with a grayish-yellow pallor
 - Signs of hypothermia: Shivering, exhaustion, memory loss, slurred speech, jittery hands, or sleepiness
- Remove any wet or damp clothing immediately at the end of your workday or shift. Drink a warm beverage in a warm room to increase your body temperature, which should be above 95 degrees.

HOW TO AVOID WINTER SLIPS, FALLS AND OTHER ACCIDENTS WHEN WORKING OUTSIDE

- Take extra time to plan your steps and take the route that provides the best footing when it's snowy and icy.
- Wear boots with rough or heavy tread when walking in the snow.
- Remember to walk cautiously to avoid slipping and falling once inside. Entrances can become very slippery from people walking in with snowy shoes.
- Stay hydrated. Hydration is as much of a risk in the winter as it is in the summer. While cold liquids are absorbed in the body quicker, warmer or room temperature drinks are better for internal body temperatures. Eating foods like fruits, vegetables, and soup are additional ways to stay hydrated.

Sources: <https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/winter/staysafe/hypothermia.html>, <https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/winter/staysafe/frostbite.html>

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