



Worker Safety

## Out in the Cold: Tips for Staying Safe

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Winter weather can be tough for those working outdoors. The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) has some great advice to help keep you safe.

### STAY ALERT

Cold temperatures and wind can cause cold stress, lowering your body temperature and leading to serious conditions like frostbite, hypothermia, chilblains, and trench foot.

- **Frostbite:** Freezing skin and tissues, causing numbness and white or pale skin. Can lead to permanent damage.
- **Hypothermia:** Dangerous drop in body temperature below 95°F. Symptoms include shivering, confusion, and slurred speech. Seek medical help immediately.
- **Chilblains:** Painful swelling and redness due to repeated exposure to cold, damp conditions.
- **Trench foot:** Non-freezing injury from prolonged wet and cold conditions. Can occur even at 60°F and can result in tissue death.

### UNDERSTANDING WIND CHILL

Wind chill combines air temperature and wind speed to show how cold it feels. For example, 40°F with a 35 mph wind feels like 28°F. Health issues such as hypertension and diabetes can increase risks. Keep an eye on weather reports:

- Wind Chill Advisory = Hazardous conditions.
- Wind Chill Warning = Life-threatening conditions.

### BE PREPARED

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) offers tips for preventing cold stress:

- **Dress in Layers:** Wear wool, silk, or synthetic fabrics that keep insulation even when wet. Multiple layers allow you to adjust to conditions.
- **Check Job Sites:** Ensure no hazards like snowdrifts or fallen trees are present.
- **Warm Break Areas:** Provide warm places for breaks, like trailers or tents.

## PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)

Weather-appropriate PPE plays a large part in helping keep workers safer in cold weather:

- **Gloves:** Essential for protecting against frostbite. Product recommendation: Northflex Cold-Grip™ with superior insulation and dexterity, and NorthFlex Cold-Grip PLUS 5® which offers double duty protection with high-level cut (A4) resistance and brushed acrylic thermal inner.
- **Eye Protection:** Anti-fog safety eyewear is imperative in cold or extreme outdoor environments. Product recommendation: Uvex Sub-Zero™ goggles offer high-impact protection and HydroShield® Anti-Fog coating for consistent fog-free usage.
- **Head Protection:** Hard hats help prevent heat loss and protect against impact and weather. Product recommendation: Fibre Metal Climbing Style Helmet Type 2 and Class E offers suspension technology which enable it to evenly distribute impact-generated force throughout the shell.
- **Footwear:** The right footwear is often necessary to reduce fall risk. Product recommendation: Oliver 45 Series safety footwear is constructed with liquid-resistant leather and offers excellent slip-resistance. The composite toe offers hi-impact protection and is 40% lighter than traditional steel toe caps. Boots are fully lined.
- **Respiratory:** Supplied Air respirator systems are often used in the cold. Product recommendation: Vortex Tube for Supplied Air Hoods. Vortex tube warms (or cools) to your supplied air system for optimum comfort.

Staying safe in cold weather helps ensure productivity and well-being, allowing workers to perform tasks effectively and efficiently. Remember to be prepared and stay aware!