

# Toolbox Talk - Winter Work

Toolbox Talks are intended to supplement training as safety and health discussions on the job site.

## Introduction

When you're cold, blood vessels in your skin, arms and legs constrict, decreasing the blood flow to your extremities. This helps your critical organs stay warm but increases risk of frostbite to your extremities.

## Tips to Prepare for Winter Work

- ☐ Always dress in layers with the outer layers being rather loose and the inner layers being somewhat tighter (to trap body heat). Synthetic fibers next to the skin can help “wick” away some sweat.
- ☐ Do not over bundle. Use the outer layer of clothing as a wind breaker. This will make the layers underneath more effective.
- ☐ Minimize sweat. If you begin to get hot, open your jacket but keep your hat and gloves on. Try to avoid getting your clothing wet. Wet clothing will not serve as good protection from the cold.
- ☐ Cover your head and ears. Over half the body’s heat loss comes from the head. Covering your head will help reduce heat loss and increase overall warmth. Covering your ears can help protect from the effects of frostbite.
- ☐ Wear the right gloves for the right job. Gloves should have enough insulation to keep you warm and prevent frostbite, but be thin enough so you can feel what you are doing if you manipulate controls or tools. Gloves that are too thick can make it difficult to hold on to objects and make your hands and wrists work harder.
- ☐ Keep your safety eyewear from fogging up in the cold. Investigate the use of anti-fog coatings or wipes to see if these products are appropriate for your eyewear. If you have to keep taking off your safety eyewear because it fogs up, it isn’t protecting you.
- ☐ Eat winter-weight meals. This does not mean a high fat diet, but one with enough calories and nutrients to give you the fuel you need. Start with a breakfast of whole grain cereal and toast.
- ☐ Make sure your footwear is adequate for winter. The soles of your boots or shoes should have enough tread to prevent slips and falls while on wet or icy surfaces. Slow down when walking across slippery surfaces and be especially careful on ladders, platforms and stairways. Walk in small steps, “Walk like a duck.”
- ☐ Be able to identify the effects of wind chill, frostbite and hypothermia and the symptoms of exposure.

Employer Flexible Safety Library

Discussion Date:\_\_\_\_\_

Trainer: \_\_\_\_\_

Employee Participants:

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Moderate Symptoms	Severe
Shivering	No shivering
Blue Lips and fingers	Irregular or undetectable pulse
Slow breathing and heart rate	No detectable breathing
Disorientation and confusion	Unconsciousness
Poor coordination	Resembles death

The material in this document is provided for informational purposes only and not as a comprehensive or exhaustive resource on this topic. The toolbox should not be used as substitution for training but as a supplement to formal training.