# SAFETY AWARENESS

Brief Topic Safety Refresher Training For Associates

2024

# Cold Weather Safety

As temperatures dip during the winter months, workers face the occupational hazard of exposure to the cold. Workers need to be especially mindful of the weather, its effects on the body, and how to keep warm and safe during these days.

There are 4 conditions that lead to cold-related stress injuries. Prepare yourself against these conditions:

- Low temperatures
- High/cool winds
- Dampness
- Cold water

#### **Common Cold-Related Stress Injuries**

**Trench Foot** is a non-freezing injury of the feet caused by prolonged exposure to wet and cold conditions. Wet feet lose heat 25-times faster than dry feet. If feet are constantly wet, trench foot can occur in temperatures as high as 60°F. Symptoms include,

- Reddening skin
- Tingling
- Pain
- Swelling
- Leg cramps

**Frostbite** is caused by the freezing of the skin and tissues. Frostbite can cause permanent damage to the body. Severe cases may require amputation. The risk of frostbite is increased in people with reduced blood circulation and among people who are not dressed properly for extremely cold temperatures. Frostbite can occur without hypothermia. Symptoms include,

- Tingling in affected body parts
- Numbness
- Changes in skin color
- Subsiding pain as the condition worsens
- Blisters may form in affected areas

**Hypothermia** affects the victim's brain, making it difficult to know if it's happening to yourself, and you may not be able to do anything about it. Look out for the following symptoms for yourself and from your colleagues:

- Uncontrollable shivering
- Slow heartbeat and weakened pulse
- Severe shaking
- Stiff muscles
- Cool skin
- Slow and irregular breathing

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## **Wear the Right Types of Clothing**

Wear at least three layers of clothing:

- An outer layer to break the wind and allow some ventilation.
- A middle layer of wool or synthetic fabric to absorb sweat and retain insulation in a damp environment.
- Inner layers of cotton or synthetic weave to allow for proper ventilation.

Pay special attention to protecting feet, hands, face, and head. Up to 40 percent of body heat can be lost when the head is exposed.

- Wear a cold-weather hard hat liner approved by ANSI and the hat's manufacturer. DO NOT wear a regular knit winter cap under your hard hat—these decrease the hat's effectiveness.
- Approved neck gaiters can help protect the face and ears.
- Wear insulated footgear to protect against cold and dampness.
- Avoid cotton socks. Wool or comparable synthetic materials better insulate heat when wet.

Keep a change of clothing, including underwear, in case work clothes become wet.

### **Preventing Cold Stress**

Practice Safe Work Habits

- Monitor workers physical condition.
- Schedule frequent short breaks in warm dry areas, to allow the body to warm up.
- Schedule work during the warmest part of the day.
- Use the buddy system (work in pairs).
- Provide warm, sweet beverages. Avoid drinks with alcohol.
- Stay well nourished by snacking on high carbohydrate foods.
- Avoid touching cold metal or wet surfaces with bare skin.
- Provide engineering controls such as radiant heaters.

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