

OSHA Training Toolbox Talk: Cold Stress – Preventing Common Cold Weather-Related Accidents

[Reference: (5)(a)(1) of OSH Act]

There are many **safe work practices** available to help keep everyone stay safe and sound while working indoors, or out, during cold weather. So, let's discuss a few safe work practices to protect yourself and others from common hazards associated with working in cold weather:

- **Remove snow and ice** before allowing workers onto outdoor walking and working surfaces such as concrete slabs, sidewalks, outdoor stairs and landings, and scaffold platforms. And, when possible, pretreat walking and working surfaces with a salt and sand mixture or an ice-melting agent before the snow and ice begins to fall.
- **Protect workers from slipping and falling** by keeping water cleaned up off of floors, to prevent slippery water and ice buildup on walking surfaces inside of cold buildings or enclosures that are not heated. This problem is especially prevalent in areas located just inside of roll-up doors or other openings into unheated buildings, where material handling equipment tracks in snow or ice when entering into the building. It also occurs often in material storage areas where ice or snow melt from materials brought in from outdoors thaws and gets onto the floor, then refreezes at night.
- **Ensure adequate ventilation** is provided for any shelter or enclosed work area being heated with portable or fixed heaters which burn combustible fuels such as gasoline, diesel, kerosine, propane, natural gas, or Sterno[®]. That is because these fuels release a colorless, odorless exhaust gas called Carbon Monoxide, also referred to as CO. Carbon Monoxide is highly toxic at low levels, and can even be deadly at higher concentrated levels in the air.
- If you drive a truck, construction equipment, or other motor vehicle outdoors and the weather is cold, **start the engine and let the motor and operator cab warm up**, while using that time to inspect the vehicle to make sure everything is operating properly. Run the defroster during warm-up to allow the windshield time to completely defrost before you leave, giving you a clear and unobstructed view. Also, use a scraper to clear ice or frost off the back and side windows, and any mirrors not equipped with a defroster.

You probably noticed that some of the recommendations listed above involve the prevention of falls on wet or icy surfaces, which can lead to workers suffering cuts, contusions, fractured or broken bones, or even a concussion. If someone does slip and fall, do not rush to move them. Instead, carefully check them for injuries, and then get medical help immediately if needed.

Are there any questions about these tips to prevent cold weather-related accidents? Please sign the training certification form to ensure you get credit for attending today's training toolbox talk.