



WINTER WEATHER HAZARDS

TOOLBOX TALK SERIES – INJURY PREVENTION

December 2024

As we approach the winter season, it's important to recognize the hazards that come with colder temperatures, snow, ice, and shorter daylight hours. Winter weather can create dangerous conditions at work sites, both indoors and outdoors. By staying vigilant and prepared, we can reduce the risk of accidents and ensure a safer environment for everyone.

1. Slips, Trips, and Falls

- **Hazard:** Snow and ice can create slippery conditions on walkways, parking lots, and around work areas.
 - **Prevention:**
 - **Proper footwear:** Wear shoes or boots with slip-resistant soles.
 - **Clear pathways:** Ensure walkways are cleared of snow and ice regularly. Use de-icers or sand to help reduce slipperiness.
 - **Walk carefully:** Take short steps, especially when walking on ice or snow, and avoid rushing.
 - **Use handrails:** When available, always use handrails on stairways.
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2. Cold Stress (Hypothermia & Frostbite)

- **Hazard:** Prolonged exposure to cold temperatures can lead to hypothermia or frostbite.
- **Prevention:**
 - **Dress in layers:** Wear moisture-wicking clothing close to your skin, followed by insulating layers, and a waterproof outer layer.
 - **Cover extremities:** Wear hats, gloves, and scarves to protect hands, feet, and ears from frostbite.





- **Stay dry:** Wet clothing increases the risk of hypothermia. Change out of wet clothes immediately.
 - **Take breaks:** Take regular breaks in a warm area to warm up and reduce the risk of cold stress.
 - **Know the symptoms:** For hypothermia, symptoms include shivering, slurred speech, and confusion. Frostbite can cause numbness or a pale, waxy appearance on the skin.
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3. Driving and Vehicle Safety

- **Hazard:** Driving in winter weather conditions such as snow, ice, and fog can be treacherous.
- **Prevention:**
 - **Prepare vehicles:** Ensure vehicles are winter-ready by checking tire pressure, brakes, lights, and fluid levels. Keep emergency kits in vehicles, including blankets, food, water, and a flashlight.
 - **Drive cautiously:** Slow down and increase following distances on icy or snowy roads. Avoid sudden movements when steering, braking, or accelerating.
 - **Clear snow/ice from vehicles:** Make sure to clear all windows, mirrors, and lights from snow or ice before driving.



4. Equipment and Tools

- **Hazard:** Cold temperatures can affect the performance of equipment, tools, and materials, making them more prone to malfunction.
- **Prevention:**
 - **Check equipment:** Inspect equipment and tools for signs of wear or damage that could be caused by cold weather.



- **Store properly:** Keep equipment in warmer areas whenever possible to prevent freezing or malfunction.
 - **Follow manufacturer guidelines:** For any tools or machinery being used in winter conditions, always follow manufacturer recommendations for cold weather use and maintenance.
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5. Snow Removal and Manual Labor

- **Hazard:** Shoveling snow and other manual tasks in cold weather can cause strain or injury.
- **Prevention:**
 - **Lift correctly:** When shoveling snow, use your legs, not your back, to prevent strains and injuries. Take frequent breaks and avoid overexertion.
 - **Avoid fatigue:** Cold weather can make you tire faster, so pace yourself and drink warm liquids to stay energized.



6. Visibility and Lighting

- **Hazard:** Shorter daylight hours and poor weather conditions can reduce visibility, increasing the risk of accidents.
 - **Prevention:**
 - **Ensure proper lighting:** Make sure your work area is well-lit, especially in low-light conditions like early mornings and late afternoons.
 - **Wear reflective clothing:** When working outside or in low visibility conditions, wear high-visibility vests or clothing.
 - **Use warning signs:** Mark hazardous areas clearly with appropriate signage and barricades.
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7. Mental and Emotional Health

- **Hazard:** The winter season can affect mental well-being due to isolation, lack of sunlight, and increased stress.
- **Prevention:**



- **Stay connected:** Encourage social interaction and check in on coworkers regularly.
 - **Take care of yourself:** Get enough rest, eat healthy, and try to get some exercise. Use lighting or other methods to reduce the impact of shorter days.
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Conclusion:

Winter weather brings unique challenges that can lead to serious hazards if not addressed properly. By being prepared, staying aware, and following proper safety procedures, we can minimize risks and protect ourselves and our coworkers during this season. Stay safe, and let's make this winter a safe and successful one!

