

HAZARD ALERT

CPWR
THE CENTER FOR CONSTRUCTION
RESEARCH AND TRAINING

WORKING IN COLD WEATHER

A Chilling Danger



When the temperature drops...

During the winter, construction workers face a natural hazard – cold weather. The colder it gets, the more energy you need to use to stay warm. When it is also windy and raining or snowing, your body uses even more energy and loses heat faster. Working in cold or freezing temperatures for a long time can lead to health problems.



What are the health risks and symptoms?

Health Risk:	Symptoms:
Hypothermia	Your temperature drops to 95°F or lower (a normal temperature is 98.6°F). You: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Shiver and stomp your feet to stay warm▶ Feel unusually tired▶ Lose coordination▶ Become confused▶ Lose consciousness
Frostbite	Your skin freezes and becomes: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Red with gray/white patches▶ Numb – you cannot feel the area▶ Blistered (in serious cases)
Trench Foot	Your foot is: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Tingly/itchy▶ Red and blotchy▶ Swollen and/or numb – you cannot feel your foot

SOURCES: OSHA Cold Stress Guide <https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/emergencypreparedness/guides/cold.html>

NIOSH Fast Facts: Protecting Yourself from Cold Stress <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2010-115/pdfs/2010-115.pdf>

**If you think you are in danger:
Contact your supervisor. Contact your union.
Call OSHA 1-800-321-OSHA**

Find out more about construction hazards.

To receive copies of this Hazard Alert and cards on other topics:

call 301-578-8500 or

email CPWR-r2p@cpwr.com

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Protect Yourself In Three Steps:

1 Dress for the weather... OSHA recommends wearing:¹

- ▶ Inner and outer layers that will keep you dry;
- ▶ A hat or hood that covers your ears, and a knit mask (if needed);
- ▶ Waterproof and insulated gloves; and
- ▶ Waterproof and insulated boots.



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TECHNICAL JOURNAL DATA

Carry extra clothes in case the ones you are wearing get wet.

¹OSHA Winter Weather Preparedness https://www.osha.gov/dts/weather/winter_weather/beprepared.html

2 Drink the right liquids... To avoid becoming dehydrated, drink plenty of warm, sweet liquids, such as:

- ▶ Sports drinks
- ▶ Soups
- ▶ Sugar water

Avoid liquids with caffeine, such as:

- ▶ Coffee
- ▶ Tea
- ▶ Soda
- ▶ Hot chocolate

Do not drink alcohol. Caffeine and alcohol cause your body to lose heat.

3 Be proactive and alert... When working in a cold environment for a long period of time:

- ▶ Learn the signs and symptoms of cold weather illnesses and injuries.
- ▶ Take frequent breaks in a warm area.
- ▶ Work in pairs so you and your coworker can spot the danger signs.
- ▶ Notify your supervisor and get medical help immediately if you or another worker has symptoms of hypothermia or another cold-related illness or injury.
- ▶ Remember – you are at a higher risk if you take certain medications, are in poor physical condition, or suffer from illnesses such as diabetes, hypertension, or cardiovascular disease.

Learn more about how to work safely in cold weather.

Visit the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA):



Visit the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH):

