Cold Environments

Being in freezing or cold temperatures for a long time can result in health problems such as trench foot, frostbite, and hypothermia (below-normal body temperature). Danger signs include uncontrolled shivering, slurred speech, clumsiness, fatigue, and confusion.

Ron's Story

Ron works in construction at a local site during the winter. One day he left his gloves and hat at home. As the day went on, he became so cold that he began to shiver. Soon he was having trouble holding his tools and doing his work. Ron was suffering from hypothermia.

- What caused this incident?
- How could this have been prevented?
- Have you ever had problems from working in the cold, or do you know someone who has? If so, what happened?

Remember This

- Wear clothes meant for cold, wet, and windy conditions. Dress in loose-fitting layers to adapt to changing temperatures. Wear a hat, socks, shoes, gloves, and outerwear that will keep you dry.
- Work in pairs so that you and your coworker can spot danger signs in each other.
- Drink plenty of warm, sweet beverages (sugar water, sports drinks), but avoid caffeine (in coffee, tea, sodas, or hot chocolate) and alcohol.
- Take breaks often, in a heated area, to warm up.
- Get medical help right away if you or another worker has symptoms of hypothermia:
  - Shivering
  - Fatigue
  - Loss of coordination
  - Confusion or disorientation
- Know that you are at higher risk if you take certain medications, are in poor physical condition, or suffer from illnesses such as diabetes, hypertension, or cardiovascular disease.

How can we stay safe today?

What will we do at the worksite to prevent illnesses and injuries in cold environments?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

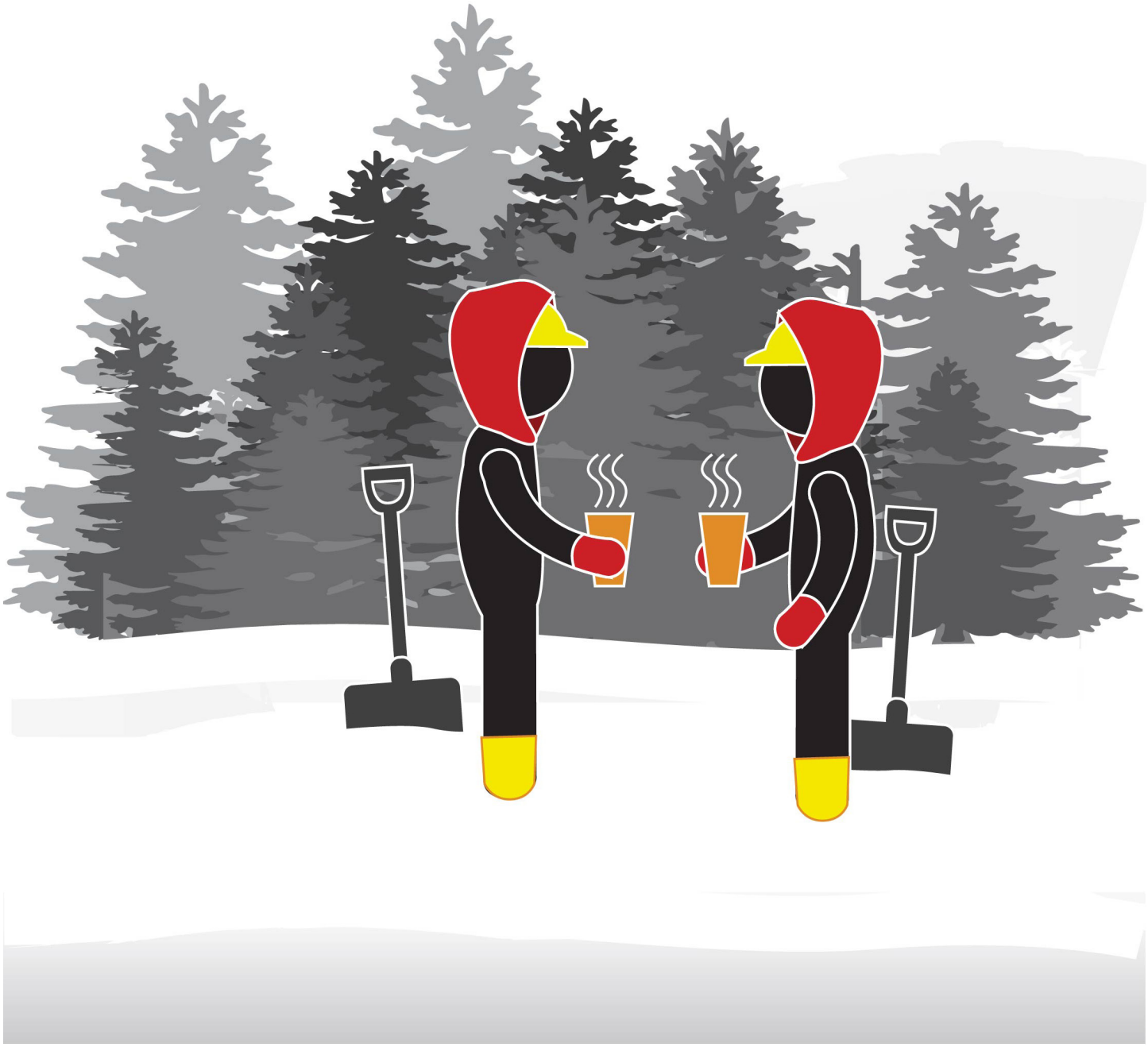
_____

CDC Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
NIOSH National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health
CPWR The Center for Construction Research and Training

Construction Toolbox Talk

NIOSH CPWR

Cold Environments



- ☑ Dress in layers. Wear a hat, gloves, and other clothing to keep you warm and dry.
- ☑ Use the buddy system so you can spot danger signs in each other.
- ☑ Drink warm, sweet beverages.

GET INFORMATION

CDC/NIOSH INFO: 1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636) | TTY: 1-800-232-6348 | cdc.gov/info | cdc.gov/niosh
CPWR: Contact 301-578-8500 | cpwr-r2p@cpwr.com | www.cpwr.com/toolbox-talks
DHHS (NIOSH) Publication No. 2022-132 | DOI: https://doi.org/10.26616/NIOSHPUB2022132 | August 2022