Cold weather toolbox talk

29 CFR 1926.154, 1926.451, 1926.21, 1926.50, 1910.151, 1926.95

Date _____ Trainer _____ Location _____

Opening question

Who here has worked a cold, windy shift and felt your fingers stop doing what you told them to?

Why it matters

Cold weather can pull heat out of your body faster than you can make it, especially when you are wet or out in the wind. As you cool down, your hands get clumsy and your thinking slows. That makes every other task more dangerous, from climbing a ladder to running a saw. Hypothermia and frostbite can creep up on you, so we watch for them in ourselves and in each other.

Key points

1. **Know the signs of hypothermia**
   Hypothermia means your body temperature has dropped too low. Early signs are shivering, tiredness, clumsy hands and confusion. A person getting hypothermia may not notice it, so check on each other at every break. If someone stops shivering while still cold, slurs words or seems confused, get them somewhere warm, call for medical help and tell the foreman.

2. **Watch for frostbite and trench foot**
   Frostbite is frozen skin and tissue, most often on fingers, toes, ears, nose and cheeks. Watch for numbness, tingling, aching, or skin that looks pale, gray or waxy. Do not rub the area; get to a warm place and get medical help. Feet that stay wet in the cold can get trench foot even when it is not freezing, so change wet socks fast.

3. **Dress in layers and stay dry**
   Wear loose layers: a base layer that pulls sweat off your skin, a warm middle layer and an outer shell that blocks wind and water. Avoid cotton next to your skin, because it holds sweat and stops keeping you warm once it is wet. Cover your head, ears and hands, wear insulated waterproof boots, and keep spare dry socks and gloves in your truck.

4. **Take warm-up breaks and refuel**
   Check the forecast and wind chill before the shift, and plan breaks in a warm, dry spot. Take them more often as it gets colder or windier. Drink warm, sweet drinks and eat during the day, because your body burns fuel to keep warm.

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5 Heat warm-up areas safely

Fuel-burning heaters give off carbon monoxide, a gas you cannot see or smell. When temporary heaters are used, fresh air must be supplied in sufficient quantities to maintain workers' health and safety (29 CFR 1926.154(a)(1)). Never run a heater or generator in a closed trailer, tent or room without ventilation, and keep heaters away from tarps and anything that burns.

29 CFR 1926.154(a)(1)

6 Watch for ice and frost

Cold mornings leave frost and ice on decks, ladders, scaffold planks and truck steps. Do not work on a scaffold covered with snow, ice or other slippery material, except to clear it off (29 CFR 1926.451(f)(8)). Salt or sand walkways, and knock the snow off your boots before you climb.

29 CFR 1926.451(f)(8)

Scenario

Picture this: it is a raw, windy morning and the crew is setting forms on an open deck. By mid-morning one worker's gloves are soaked, he has gone quiet and he keeps dropping his tools. He says he is fine and wants to finish before the break. What do you do, and who do you tell?

Crew discussion

1. Where is our warm-up spot today, and when will we use it?
2. What spare dry gear do you have in your truck or bag right now?
3. What would you do if your buddy stopped shivering but still seemed cold and confused?
4. Where do ice and standing water build up first on this site?

Bottom line **Stay dry, take your warm-up breaks and watch your buddy, because cold stress is much easier to stop early than to treat late.**

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Sign-in sheet / Hoja de asistencia

Topic / Tema Cold stress / Estrés por frío

Date / Fecha _____

Trainer / Instructor _____ Location / Lugar _____ Company / Empresa _____

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