

11-10-2025 - TBT - 12

Helpful facts about Cold Stress Prevention at Work

11/10/2025 TBT - 12 Helpful Facts About Cold Stress Prevention at Work

1. **Cold Stress Can Happen Above Freezing** – Many workers think cold stress only happens in extreme cold, but **temperatures as high as 50°F**, combined with wind, wet clothing, or exhaustion, can still lead to hypothermia.
2. **Wind Chill Makes It Worse** – The **wind chill factor** can make temperatures feel much colder than they are. A 20°F temperature with a 20-mph wind can feel like **5°F**, increasing the risk of frostbite and hypothermia. (See our short video on this topic below).
3. **Wet Clothing Drastically Increases Heat Loss** – Water conducts heat away from the body **25 times faster than dry air**, so wet clothing—whether from sweat, rain, or snow—can rapidly lead to cold stress. **Stay dry to stay warm.**
4. **Frostbite Can Happen in Minutes** – In extreme cold, **exposed skin can develop frostbite in as little as 10-15 minutes**. Workers should wear insulated gloves, hats, and face coverings when working in freezing temperatures.
5. **Hypothermia Doesn't Always Look Obvious** – A worker with hypothermia might just seem **confused, clumsy, or unusually tired**. If someone **stumbles, slurs their speech, or appears disoriented**, they need to be warmed up immediately.
6. **Layering Clothing is Key** – The best way to stay warm is by wearing **three layers**: a moisture-wicking base layer, an insulating middle layer (like wool or fleece), and a waterproof outer layer to block wind and moisture.
7. **Dehydration is Still a Risk in Cold Weather** – Workers lose fluids through sweat and breathing, even in the cold. **Drinking warm fluids** like soup or tea, along with plenty of water, helps maintain hydration and circulation.

8. **Breaks in Warm Areas Are Essential** – Workers should take **frequent breaks in a heated shelter** to prevent prolonged exposure. Short, regular warm-up periods are better than working continuously in the cold.
9. **Alcohol and Caffeine Can Increase Cold Stress Risk** – Alcohol gives a false sense of warmth by drawing heat away from vital organs. Caffeine can reduce circulation. **Water, warm decaffeinated tea, or electrolyte drinks** are the best options.
10. **Cold-Related Illnesses Can Happen Indoors Too** – Unheated buildings, poorly insulated work areas, and **cold storage facilities** can put indoor workers at risk. Proper PPE and warm break areas are just as important inside as they are outside.
11. **Older Workers Are at Higher Risk** – Workers over **50** may have a harder time regulating body temperature and noticing early signs of cold stress. They should take extra precautions and warm up more frequently.
12. **Numb Fingers and Toes Mean It's Time to Warm Up** – If a worker loses feeling in their fingers, toes, or ears, that's an early sign of frostbite. **Immediate rewarming** in a warm area can prevent permanent damage.

By Clicking "Mark as Read" - you are acknowledging you have read this entire (opened appropriate attachments) ToolBox Talk and understand this is company policy and will abide by regulations outlined in this safety policy. Please complete your acknowledgement within 24 hours of release. If you are receiving this notice, you are REQUIRED to read this content.

Revision #1

Created 2025-11-12 14:11:47 UTC by Blain Schumacher

Updated 2025-11-12 14:13:46 UTC by Blain Schumacher