

TOOLBOX TALK #48

PROTECT AGAINST THE COLD

A thorough workplace safety and health plan should include steps to protect workers from cold-related hazards. This is particularly important for workers in industries like construction. Exposure to cold can be an uncomfortable and potentially dangerous situation says the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) The Agency offers recommendations for both employers and workers.

Employers should:

- Train supervisors and workers to prevent, recognize and treat cold-related illnesses and injuries. This training should be presented in a language all workers can understand.
- Reduce the amount of time workers spend in a cold environment. Rotate workers in and out on long, demanding jobs.
- Provide access to warm areas, and encourage workers to take breaks in those areas. Also, set up a place fo workers to change out of wet clothes.
- Initiate a buddy system for workers to help monitor them in cold conditions.
- Keep a first aid kit stocked, and make sure to include a medical and an environmental thermometer as well as chemical heat packs.
- Provide appropriate cold-weather gear such as hats, gloves and boots for work in cold environments. Don't forget wind-protective clothing based on air velocities.
- Give prompt medical attention to works who show signs of cold-related illness or injury.

Workers can help by:

- Taking regular breaks to warm up.
- Monitoring your physical condition and that of your co-workers.
- Staying hydrated.
- Snacking on high carbohydrate foods.
- Avoiding touching cold metal o wet surfaces with bare skin.

