TOOL BOX TALKS

ORYX
INSURANCE BROKERAGE INCORPORATED

Warm Up to the Cold Facts

Winter signals the need to take extra precautions, because prolonged exposure to cold can cause problems, particularly with workers who must spend a lot of time outside.

Frostbite is a severe reaction by the skin to cold that can permanently damage fingers, toes, the nose, and the ear lobes. The symptoms of frostbite are a loss of feeling (numbness), whitish skin, and sometimes, blisters. If medical help is not immediately available, slowly rewarm affected areas, but do not soak in hot water, rub with your hands, or use a heat source!

Hypothermia occurs when the entire body becomes cold, and the body's core temperature drops below 95°F. Symptoms include uncontrollable shivering, drowsiness, disorientation, slurred speech, and exhaustion.

Keep the victim as warm as possible until medical help arrives. If the body temperature continues to drop, unconsciousness or even heart failure may result. Warm the body first and then the arms and legs, using blankets. Get the person into dry clothing if possible. Do not give the person any alcohol, hot beverages or food.

Using certain drugs for diabetes, heart and vascular conditions, and thyroid problems can increase the risk of cold-related problems. So can alcohol, nicotine, and caffeine.

Dress for Cold Weather Success

If you will be working outdoors, wear loose-fitting, natural-fiber clothing. Wear several layers of clothing, rather than one thick sweater. The air trapped between the layers helps to insulate the body. Outer garments should be of tightly woven, waterproof material.

Mother was right—wear a hat! Half of the body's heat is lost through the top of the head! If there is wind, consider wearing earflaps or a hood, a scarf, and a facemask. Use the scarf to cover your mouth in order to protect the lungs from frigid air.

To protect your other extremities, wear mittens or gloves that fit snugly at the wrist, sturdy shoes, and two layers of warm socks.

Good Winter Work Practices

There are a number of things you can do to protect yourself from cold-related injuries:

- Allow a period of adjustment to the cold before actual work starts.
- Pace yourself to reduce the level of activity outside. Take extra breaks if you feel cold or tired, especially if the temperature is under 20°F.
- Use an on-site source of heat such as air jets, radiant heaters, or contact-warm plates.
- Shield work areas from drafts and wind or, if possible, move work to a shielded area.
- Use tools with insulated handles.
- Change any wet clothing immediately.
- Watch out for your co-workers.

HOW THIS TOPIC APPLIES TO THIS JOB:

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ATTENDEES: Print Name / Signature (use back if necessary)

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DATE: _____

SUPERVISOR / FOREMAN SIGNATURE:

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JOBSITE / PROJECT#:

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