Winter Work: Slips, Ice, Cold Stress and Snow Hazards Meeting Kit



WHAT’S AT STAKE

Cold weather changes the job instantly. Ice makes every step unpredictable, snow hides hazard you normally see, and freezing temperatures drain your strength faster than you realize. Whether you are outdoors or moving between warm and cold areas, winter conditions increase the risk of slips, falls, frostbite and fatigue. Staying alert and prepared is the only way to keep simple tasks from turning into cold weather emergencies.

WHAT’S THE DANGER

Winter turns normal work into a mix of hidden hazards and fast changing conditions. Ice, snow and freezing temperatures don’t give warnings, and by the time you feel the impact, you may already be in trouble. The danger is how quickly footing disappears, how fast the cold drains your body and how easily simple tasks become risky when weather shifts.

Slippery Surfaces You Cannot See Coming

Ice can blend into the ground until it is almost invisible. Snow can hide curbs, steps, holes and uneven surfaces that would normally be obvious. One wrong step is all it takes to slip, fall or twist an ankle, especially when you are carrying tools or moving quickly.

Cold Stress Builds Faster Than You Expect

Cold temperatures reduce circulation, stiffen muscles and make your hands slower and less reliable. When your body struggles to stay warm, reaction time drops and decision making gets harder. Frostbite and hypothermia do not feel serious at first, which is why workers often miss the early warning signs.

Weather Can Change Without Warning

Snowfall, wind gusts, freezing rain or sudden temperature drops can appear in minutes. Equipment freezes, walkways become slick, and visibility drops. If workers are not prepared, these rapid changes can put them in dangerous situations long before they have time to adjust.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

Working safely in winter means slowing down, staying alert and preparing for conditions that can change in seconds. Cold, ice and snow affect your footing, your visibility and even your decision making, so the goal is to stay warm, stay steady and stay aware of what is beneath and around you.

Dress for the Weather and Protect Your Body

Layer clothing so you can stay warm without overheating. Keep extremities covered with gloves, hats and insulated boots since fingers and toes lose heat fastest. Choose waterproof outer layers to stay dry, because wet clothing increases heat loss and raises the risk of hypothermia.

Move Carefully and Control Your Pace

Take shorter steps on icy or snowy surfaces and keep your weight centered. Use handrails and avoid sudden turns or quick movements that can cause slipping. When carrying materials, keep your hands free when possible so you can balance and catch yourself if needed.

What to Do to Stay Safe During Winter Work

- Wear slip resistant footwear and check soles for packed snow or ice
- Clear snow and apply sand or salt to walkways before starting tasks
- Use ice cleats or traction aids when conditions are severe
- Keep gloves dry and change them if they become wet
- Clear vehicle windshields, mirrors and lights before moving
- Watch for fogged eyewear when transitioning indoors and outdoors
- Stay hydrated and take warm up breaks in a sheltered area
- Report icy patches or snow buildup immediately

Stay Ahead of Rapid Weather Changes

Monitor forecasts and pay attention to sudden temperature drops or incoming freezing rain. Snowfall, wind or ice can create new hazards faster than you expect. If conditions become too unsafe, stop work and move to a sheltered area until it is safe to continue.

FINAL WORD

Winter hazards appear fast, and even simple tasks can become dangerous when ice, snow or cold stress are involved. Taking your time, staying warm and watching the ground ahead are small choices that prevent serious injuries.