

## What You Can Do to Prevent Cold Stress Injuries

Winter weather is just around the corner, but did you know cold stress, or "hypothermia," can occur any time of year? In fact, most cases of cold stress develop in air temperatures between 30 and 50 degrees Fahrenheit. People who are exposed to lower temperatures are at risk for injuries ranging from frostbite to serious loss of body heat which could result in brain damage or death.

**Dress warmly, in layers.** Preserving an air space between the body and the outer layer of clothing will help retain body heat. Choose fabrics such as cotton or wool which insulate but also allow sweat to evaporate. It is especially important to protect the feet, hands, head, and face. These parts of the body are farthest from the heart and are the hardest to keep warm. Almost half your body heat can be lost through the head, so cover it up as well.

**Keep dry.** Wetness greatly increases the chance of cold stress. Always have extra clothing available if there's a chance you could get wet. Keep your feet dry, they are very susceptible to frostbite.

**Take breaks.** You may think it's wise to keep on working in cold temperatures. After all, working makes you break a sweat and you feel warmer. But if you become fatigued during physical activity, your body loses its ability to properly retain heat. This causes rapid cooling which can quickly lead to cold stress. When you take a break, be sure to replace lost fluids and calories by drinking warm, sweet, caffeine-free nonalcoholic drinks and soup.

**Personal Protective Equipment:** Always wear your personal protective equipment. Remember, during winter, your plastic hard hat may get brittle as well as your hard hat liner. Inspect them regularly during the winter months and replace them as needed. Always wear your rubber gloves. We have a ground to ground rubber glove policy for your protection. This goes for climbers too.

**Daily Pre-trip Truck Inspections:** Make sure you keep up your daily pre-trip truck inspections and document them in your vehicle inspection logs. Wipe down those booms and keep the water and ice off them. Clean off your truck beds and if you haven't taken ol' Bessie to the truck wash lately, make a trip in to clean her off.

**Winter Driving:** Buckle up and slow down during periods of limited visibility and icy driving conditions. Get there safely. Make sure you have the essentials to get you out of the ditch should you slide off the road. Make sure those windshields are defrosted before you begin your trips.

**Water (Silver) Fire Extinguishers:** Please remember to either drain or put your Water Fire Extinguishers in a warm place for this winter. If they freeze, it will ruin the extinguishers.

