

Working Outdoors In Cold Weather

Editor's note: Our Tailgate Training Tip Sheets are available in Spanish at www.gemplers.com.

KEY POINTS:

- Wear dry clothing when working outdoors.
- Wear several layers of clothing rather than a single heavy jacket.
- Drink plenty of water to keep from getting dehydrated.
- Dehydration is a major contributor to hypothermia.



Note to trainer: Follow this script or use it to help guide you through a 10- to 15-minute tailgate training session for your ag/hort workers. You may photocopy this sheet for your employees' personal use. However, it may not be published or sold.

Cold weather can be dangerous

- For many of us, winter is a welcome escape from working outdoors in hot, humid weather.
- But cold winter weather presents some serious risks. Among them are:
 - Frostbite, or the freezing of body parts exposed to the cold. Frostbite can be mild or it can be severe, resulting in the destruction of body tissue. The parts of the body most likely to be frostbitten are your nose, cheeks, ears, toes and fingers.
 - Hypothermia, or the loss of body heat due to prolonged exposure to the cold. Hypothermia is a life-threatening condition. You are more likely to rapidly lose body heat when your clothes are wet.
- It's important that you know what to do to reduce your risk of cold-related injuries.



Note to trainer: Our next Tailgate Training Tip Sheet will give you tips on recognizing and treating cold-related injuries.

Who is at risk?

- Cold-related injuries can result even if you're only outdoors for short periods of time.
- This is especially true if you work in a greenhouse or other environment where your clothing gets wet.
- Your risk of a cold-related injury also increases with:
 - high winds
 - inadequate or improper clothing
 - physical exhaustion
 - dehydration, or a loss of body fluids
 - alcohol or tobacco use, which can lead to increased heat loss
 - diabetes, circulatory problems and certain other medical conditions



Always dress appropriately in cold winter weather.

(Continued on back)

See our full line of safety supplies, including respirators, eye and ear protection, coveralls, first aid and more.

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Wear the proper clothing

- One of the best ways to prevent cold-related injuries is to wear the right clothing outdoors.
- It's better to wear several layers of clothing than a single heavy coat or jacket. If possible, wear a thin layer next to your skin such as polyester or polypropylene. This will help keep the heat close to your body. Wear this under a warm layer of clothing such as wool under an outer jacket that repels water and cuts the wind.
- You should also wear a warm hat that covers your ears, gloves or mittens, dry socks, and dry shoes or boots that protect your feet against cold and dampness.
- A scarf or ski mask will also help protect your face.



More cold weather tips

1. Always dress properly for cold weather. Put on warm clothes before you go outside. Carry extra dry clothing if you're likely to get wet.
2. Keep your skin dry. Wet skin freezes quicker than dry skin.
3. Drink plenty of water to keep from getting dehydrated.
4. If possible, do some of your outdoor work during the warmest part of the day.
5. Avoid sitting still outdoors for long periods of time. And take adequate breaks from the cold.
6. Don't touch metal or wear metal jewelry outdoors in the cold. Metal conducts cold, thus increasing your chances of frostbite.
7. Avoid alcohol, cigarettes, coffee and other drinks with caffeine. Smoking decreases circulation; alcohol increases the rate at which your body cools.
8. Stay in good physical shape.



Avoid alcohol, cigarettes and coffee in cold outdoor weather.

Are there any questions?

Note to trainer: Take time to answer trainees' questions. Then review the **Cold Weather Do's and Don'ts**.

COLD WEATHER DO'S AND DON'TS

DO:

- Keep your energy level up when working outdoors in the cold. Sweet snacks will help.
- Immediately seek shelter and call for emergency medical help if you or a co-worker can't stop shivering, begin stumbling, or become confused or severely fatigued.

DON'T:

- Overestimate your ability to do strenuous work. Set a reasonable pace for yourself.
- Work outdoors in the cold if you are physically exhausted or in poor physical shape.
- Wear wet clothing outdoors in the cold.

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