



Prevent cold stress on the jobsite

As fall quickly turns into winter, it's important to remember: cold stress can happen fast — and it doesn't care if you're inside, outside, or in transit. If you're working in cold air temperatures, you're at risk.

Cold stress happens when your body can't warm itself fast enough. That leads to serious health problems like hypothermia, frostbite, and trench foot — and in extreme cases, it can be fatal.

Cold stress illnesses to watch for

Immersion/trench foot

This is caused by prolonged exposure to wet and cold conditions — even if it's not freezing. Symptoms include red skin, numbness or tingling, pain in legs or feet, swelling, and blisters.

What to do:

- Get medical help
- Remove wet boots and socks
- Dry your feet gently (don't rub)
- Stay off your feet until a medical professional evaluates you

Frostbite

Frostbite happens when skin and tissue freeze—usually on fingers, toes, nose, or ears. Symptoms include red skin with gray or white patches, tingling, aching, loss of feeling, and blistering. Affected areas feel harder than normal.

What to do:

- Get medical help immediately
- Wrap the area loosely in a dry cloth
- Do not rub or try to rewarm the area — this can cause more damage

Hypothermia

Hypothermia is caused by prolonged exposure to cold—especially when wet or in windy conditions. It can happen even in temperatures above 40°F if you're soaked from rain or sweat. Early signs include shivering. Advanced symptoms include confusion, slurred speech, loss of coordination, slow heart rate or breathing, and unconsciousness.

What to do:

- Call 911 immediately — this is a medical emergency
- Move the person to a warm, dry area
- Remove wet clothing carefully
- Wrap in dry clothes or blankets — cover the whole body except the face
- Place warm packs in armpits, groin, and sides of the body

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Safety tips to prevent cold stress

- Know the signs and speak up if you or a coworker shows symptoms
- Dress smart — layer up with moisture-wicking and wind-resistant gear
- Take breaks — warm up in heated areas regularly
- Use the buddy system and watch out for each other
- Stay hydrated with warm, sweet beverages
- Use heaters — radiant heaters or warming stations help
- Talk to your supervisor — make sure cold stress safety is part of the plan

Final reminder

Cold stress can hit anytime, anywhere — even inside cold storage or during short outdoor tasks. Stay alert, stay warm, and don't hesitate to ask for help. Your safety matters. Let's work together to keep everyone protected this winter.

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