

Cold Stress

About 10 minutes to deliver

Wet is worse than cold, hypothermia starts in the 40s and 50s, and the umbles tell you before the worker does.

Cold does not need to be arctic to hurt people. Hypothermia happens regularly in the 40s and 50s Fahrenheit when someone is wet, tired, underfed or standing still in wind.

TWO THINGS MAKE COLD DANGEROUS

Water conducts heat about 25 times faster than air. Wet clothing is the single biggest factor, and it does not matter whether it came from rain, a hose or your own sweat.

Wind strips away the still air next to your skin. 20°F with a 25 mph wind takes heat out of you like still air near 3°F, and exposed skin can freeze in about 30 minutes.

DRESS FOR IT

- Three layers. Inner layer wicks — synthetic or wool, never cotton, which soaks and holds it. Middle layer insulates. Outer layer blocks wind and sheds water while still letting vapour out.
- Shed a layer before you sweat, put it back the moment you stop. The most common mistake is overdressing for hard work and then taking a break soaked.
- Loose beats tight. Boots laced too tight and gloves too small restrict circulation in exactly the extremities you are protecting.
- Spare socks and gloves. Being able to change out of wet ones mid-shift prevents more cold injury than anything else you can carry.

WATCH FOR THE UMBLES

Stumbles, mumbles, fumbles and grumbles. Slurring, clumsiness, confusion, unusual irritability — those are the early signs of hypothermia, and the person having them is the least able to notice.

Shivering that stops without the person getting warmer is a bad sign, not a good one.

Get them somewhere warm, out of wet clothing, into dry layers, warm sweet drinks if fully alert. Confused, very drowsy or not shivering in the cold — call 911. Handle them gently.

FROSTBITE

Numbness, waxy white or greyish skin, hard or unusually firm to touch. Warm it gradually — never rub it, never use direct heat. If it may refreeze before you reach help, do not thaw it.

AND TWO THAT RIDE ALONG

Carbon monoxide from fuel-burning heaters in enclosed break areas kills people doing everything else right. Ice on walkways and equipment steps causes more injuries all winter than the cold itself.

ASK THE CREW

- Is there somewhere warm to take a break, and is it close enough to use?
- Has anyone got wet feet or gloves right now?
- Are we running any fuel-burning heater in an enclosed space?

OSH Act § 5(a)(1)

This is a toolbox talk, not a course. It is general awareness on one topic — not site-specific, not a hazard assessment, and not a substitute for assessment of your workplace by a competent person, your written programs, or manufacturers' instructions. It does not by itself satisfy any OSHA training requirement. Regulations change; verify against the current standard. Whoever delivers it is responsible for deciding it is suitable and sufficient for the work. Where a talk covers first aid, resuscitation, or mental health it is general safety information, not medical advice, not a substitute for professional medical care or certified emergency-response training, and it confers no certification — in an emergency, call 911. Free to print and use, as is, with no warranty of any kind. Migna Safety Solutions · training.mignasafety.com

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ATTENDANCE RECORD

Cold Stress

About 10 minutes to deliver · OSH Act § 5(a)(1)

Date

Job / site

Delivered by

Company

#	Print name	Signature	Date
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I delivered this talk and determined it was suitable for this crew and this work.

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