

Dear valued partner,

When winter arrives, the workplace can become a more hazardous environment. Cold temperatures, snow, ice, wind chill, and reduced daylight can all pose serious risks to worker health and safety. From slip/trip hazards to cold-related illnesses and equipment failures, winter weather demands extra vigilance and proactive planning.

Which of the following is NOT a recommended best practice for preventing cold stress in outdoor workers during winter?

- A. Providing warm, sweetened (non-alcoholic) fluids to workers throughout the shift
- B. Encouraging workers to wear multiple layers of clothing, including a moisture-wicking inner layer
- C. Allowing workers to “push through” early signs of cold stress to maintain productivity
- D. Scheduling frequent short breaks in a heated shelter or warm area

Answer at the end of the email.



(Missed a previous email? [Click here](#) to see an archive of previous months' safety emails on Rockwood's Loss Control website).



UNDERSTANDING THE HAZARDS

Cold Stress and Related Illnesses

Cold stress occurs when the body can no longer maintain adequate heat, leading to conditions such as hypothermia, frostbite, trench foot, and chilblains.

Illness	Description	Signs/Symptoms	Action
Hypothermia	Occurs when core body temperature drops below ~95 °F.	Early signs include uncontrollable shivering, fatigue, confusion; advanced stages may have slurred speech, loss of coordination, drowsiness, and/or unconsciousness.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Call for help. 2. Move to a warmer place. 3. Remove wet clothing. 4. Wrap in warm blankets. 5. Warm the core first. 6. Insulate the head and neck. 7. Keep the person horizontal. 8. Offer warm, non-alcoholic fluids.

Frostbite	Freezing of skin and underlying tissues, primarily on extremities (fingers, toes, nose, ears).	Symptoms include numbness, tingling, waxy skin, blistering in severe cases.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Remove any wet clothing. 2. Wrap the frostbitten foot in a warm blanket. 3. Soak the frostbitten foot in warm water. 4. Apply a nonprescription pain reliever. 5. Avoid direct heat sources.
Trench Foot and Chilblains	Caused by prolonged exposure to wet, cold feet (trench foot) or repeated exposure to cool, damp conditions (chilblains).	Numbness, tingling, pain, swelling, redness and changes in skin color, blisters and sores, cold & blotchy skin	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Remove wet socks and shoes immediately. 2. Thoroughly clean and gently dry the feet. 3. Soak the feet in warm water or apply warm packs to gradually raise their temperature. 4. Elevate the feet to improve blood flow. 5. Use over the counter pain medications to lessen swelling and pain. 6. Seek medical attention if you suspect trench foot.

Risk factors include wet clothing, fatigue, lack of acclimatization, underlying medical conditions (e.g. hypertension, diabetes), and poor physical conditioning. Wind chill accelerates heat loss from the body: as wind speed increases, the effective “feels like” temperature drops, increasing cold stress risk.

Other Winter Hazards

Beyond cold stress, winter conditions introduce additional workplace hazards:

- [Slips, Trips, and Falls](#)
- [Falls from Heights/Rooftop Snow Removal](#): Snow or ice may conceal hazards (e.g. skylights), and surfaces may become unstable. Proper fall protection and planning are essential.
- [Winter Driving/Vehicle Hazards](#)
- [Power Line & Electrical Hazards](#): Snow-laden branches or ice may bring down power lines. Working near downed lines during snow removal requires caution, hazard analysis, and energized work protocols.
- [Carbon Monoxide Exposure](#): Fuel-burning heaters or equipment in enclosed or semi-enclosed spaces may build up CO. MSHA warns that portable heaters can emit CO, and enclosed cabins, vehicles, or trailers may trap it.



Mining Winter Hazards


In mining operations, winter weather poses special risks: freezing and thawing cycles can destabilize highwalls and surfaces, and low barometric pressure with low humidity can contribute to explosion risks in coal mines via increased methane propagation or coal dust suspension. MSHA issues “Winter Alert” guidance annually to highlight these hazards.



SAFETY TIPS FOR WINTER SAFETY

Follow these tips to help avoid incident or injury:

 <p>Hazard Assessment & Planning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Monitor weather forecasts and wind chill warnings (e.g. via NOAA / NWS)• Identify tasks and work zones at greatest risk (roofs, walkways, vehicle operations)• Plan for alternate methods (e.g. deicing, heated shelters) to reduce time in exposure• Include cold-weather contingencies in emergency response plans• Educate workers on cold stress hazards, recognizing signs/symptoms, and first aid response
 <p>Controls and PPE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use mechanical snow/ice-removal equipment to minimize manual labor on surfaces• Schedule heavier work during warmer hours of the day• Limit continuous exposure time, especially for new or unacclimated workers• Maintain hydration• Encourage layering clothing

 <p>Maintenance & Equipment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inspect and winterize vehicles (brakes, tires, defrosters, battery) • Maintain exhaust systems; ensure ventilation for heaters to prevent CO buildup • Keep travel ways, ramps, and roadways clear of snow/ice; apply salt or sand for traction • In mining: inspect highwalls, thaw/freeze-affected surfaces, check for gas hazards, maintain rock dusting & ventilation
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Rockwood resources:

- [Icy Sidewalks](#) – Poster
- [Snow Removal Safety](#) – Poster
- [Winter Hand Care](#) – Poster
- [Ice and Snow- Penguin Walk](#) – Poster

You can find additional Rockwood Toolbox Talks [here](#).

OSHA, MSHA and other resources:

- [Working Safely in Cold Weather](#) | OSHA Tips
- [Protecting Workers from Cold Stress](#) | OSHA Quick Cards
- [Work / Warm-up Schedule](#) | ACGIH Chart
- [Winter Safety Presentation 2023](#) | National Weather Service Winter Weather Safety Presentation
- [BREAK THE ICE \(comparison of Ice Melting Chemicals\)](#) | Peters Chemical Company
- [MSHA Winter - Safety Alert](#) | Mine Safety & Health Administration
- [Winter Safety Checklist for Mines](#) | US Department of Labor Blog | MSHA



Learn more about winter safety on Streamery

Every Rockwood policy includes access to Streamery, a vast safety library with videos, quizzes and more resources to help you promote safety in your workplace. If you don't have access, contact us to get a username. Enter the SKU number below to find the recommended video.

Watch these videos on [Streamery](#):

- **Winter Safety:** 15 min / SKU: 4289 / English
- **Winter Walking – Staying on your Feet:** 10 min / SKU: 3074 + 3074-S/ English & Spanish
- **Winter Driving – When the Rules Change:** 16 min / SKU: 2324 / English
- **Cold Stress and Hypothermia:** 9 min / SKU: 4209 / English



Bonus materials:

1: Safety Committee Certifications have moved from HANDS to WCAIS

New applications and recertifications for your PA Certified Safety Committees have transitioned to a new program that started in September. If your renewal date is coming up, you will need to use the new system on WCAIS, as the HANDS program is no more. For more information click [here](#) and click on Health & Safety on the left-hand side.

2: US Department of Labor Updates Penalty Guidelines to Support Small Businesses and Eliminate Workplace Hazards

[US Department of Labor updates penalty guidelines to support small businesses and eliminate workplace hazards | Occupational Safety and Health Administration](#)

3: Seat Belt Covers

Don't forget that Rockwood Casualty is providing **FREE** high visibility seatbelt covers to our insureds to assist in enforcement of seatbelt use by employees. Please contact safetyolutions@rockwoodcasualty.com to make a request for your company and specify orange or yellow.



Questions? Feel free to reach out

As always, your Rockwood partners are available to answer your questions and help you promote safety in the workplace. [Contact Rockwood Loss Control](#) for any support you need.

Thank you for your continued partnership,

Rockwood Loss Control Team
Safetyolutions@rockwoodcasualty.com

 [#RockwoodSafetySolutions](#) [#LossControl](#) [#SafetyTips](#)



ANSWER: Which of the following is NOT a recommended best practice for preventing cold stress in outdoor workers during winter?

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- C. **Allowing workers to “push through” early signs of cold stress to maintain productivity**
- D. Scheduling frequent short breaks in a heated shelter or warm area