

Getting Ready for Winter Work



Frostbite and hypothermia can occur at much higher temperatures than many people realize. Exposed skin can start to freeze at just 28 degrees F (-2 degrees C), and loss of body temperature can occur even in winter conditions people might not consider particularly nasty. Here are some reminders about dressing for the weather and staying safe:

- **Wear the right gloves for the work you are doing.** Gloves should have enough insulation to keep you warm and prevent frostbite, but they should also be thin enough so you can feel what you are doing. Gloves that are too thick can also make your hands and wrists work too hard trying to hold on to objects, causing repetitive strain injury.
- **Dress in layers of light-weight clothing,** which keep you warmer than a single layer of heavy clothes. Remove layers as necessary to prevent overheating and perspiring, which can lead to chills or hypothermia.
- **Wear a hat.** As much as 50% of your body heat can go up in steam off the top of a bare head. Protect your ears from frostbite as well by wearing a hat that will cover your ears (or use ear muffs).
- **Check your winter clothing for entanglement hazards,** such as loose sleeves, scarves, and dangling drawstrings.
- **Keep your safety eyewear from fogging up in the cold.** Consider using anti-fog coatings or wipes. If you must keep taking off your safety eyewear because it fogs up, it isn't protecting you.
- **Look at the soles of your winter footwear.** Your shoes or boots should have adequate tread to prevent slips and falls on wet or icy surfaces. For extremely slippery situations, you can attach clogs or cleats to your footwear. Slow down when walking across slippery surfaces and be especially careful on ladders, platforms and stairways.

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