

COLD WEATHER PPE

Week Number 51 (December 17 - 23) 2017 Edition

OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this safety talk, participants will be able to:

- *Understand how to protect themselves against cold temperatures*
- *Be familiar with how cold weather PPE can protect against cold temperatures*

The best way to protect workers from cold weather injuries is to not work in the cold. Unfortunately, most don't have that luxury. The next best way is to keep workers warm and that is best done through the use of cold weather PPE. The basics are pretty obvious when it comes to PPE for the cold; clothing, footwear and socks.

Protective clothing is needed when work is done at temperatures of 40° F or lower. The clothing selected should meet the weather conditions; temperature, wind speed, rain or snow as well as how long the job will take, is the worker to be outside the whole time and how strenuous the job will be. Multiple layers give more insulation than one thick layer. Layers also give a worker more options; if the weather changes, layers can be removed or adjusted according to the change. The innermost layer should provide insulation as well as wick sweat away from the body; thermal underwear made with polyester is good for this purpose. Other layers should be easy to open to prevent the buildup of excess heat.

The outer layer should have a way to open at the neck, waist and wrists as a way to regulate how much heat is kept in or released. The outer layer needs to be waterproof when work is done in wet conditions. Clothes should be kept clean and dry in order for them to work best at insulating. We've all heard that 50% of the body's heat is lost through the head. It is true, so it is necessary to wear a knit cap or liner under a hard hat to minimize this loss. Gloves should also be used if the job allows it.

To prevent excessive sweating while on the job, workers should remove clothing in this order:

- Gloves or mittens (unless protection is needed from snow or ice)
- Headgear and scarf
- Open the jacket at the waist and wrists
- Remove layers of clothing.

As the worker cools back down, the clothing should be replaced in reverse order.

It is also important to keep the feet warm and dry. One or two pair of socks being worn is an individual's choice. It is important that the socks worn are able to wick away moisture and fit comfortably inside of the boot. Boots should be felt-lined, rubber bottomed with leather tops to allow the feet to "breathe". If work is done in wet environments, the boots need to be waterproofed as well.

The correct choice of clothing can make the difference between a comfortable, safe day on the job and a potential trip to the emergency room.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- At what temperature should cold weather PPE be used?
- What are the main components needed for cold weather PPE?
- Why is wearing layers so important when working in the cold?
- Why is it important to keep your cold weather gear clean?