**Winter Weather Safety Talk**

Winter weather can pose many different hazards at work. Temperatures drop and weather conditions like snow and ice make travel dangerous. All employees should keep safety top of mind both on and around the jobsite.

**Crash statistics for winter driving**

Winter is one of the most common times of year for car accidents. You can easily lose control of your vehicle driving in icy and slick conditions. The Federal Highway Administration reports that around 900 people are killed and 76,000 people are injured in car accidents during snowfall or sleet every year.

* Winter weather is also at fault for millions of dollars’ worth of property damage.
* Operating a vehicle in winter weather requires extra care and caution, even for experienced drivers.

**On the job injuries due to winter weather**

When you live in an area that experiences moderate to severe winter conditions, take the needed precautions to keep walking surfaces clear of hazards, including snow and ice. Slips, trips, and falls are some of the most common causes of injuries while working during the winter. Some slips, trips, and falls even cause fatalities.

As an employee, it is your job to follow best safety practices for winter weather. Clear snow and ice frequently with shovels, snowblowers, and plows, and regularly salt parking lots and walkways.

**Safety tips for winter**

Whether your job requires you to be working indoors, outdoors, or on the road, there are many basic precautions to take to help make sure you and your coworkers stay as safe as possible.

**Winter Driving Safety**

If the job that you are performing requires you to be on the road, you will need to drive more cautiously in winter conditions. Consider making a winter weather driving safety checklist for yourself that includes the following action items:

* Watch the news and monitor incoming weather
* Leave a day early or late to avoid bad conditions
* Don't drive if you don't have to
* Be defensive while driving
* Stay a safe distance away from other vehicles
* Drive slow

**Winter slips, trips, and falls safety**

When there is snow, ice, and sleet on the ground, driving to work is not the only hurdle to working safely. Walking on, to, or around an icy or snowy jobsite can lead to slips, trips, and falls. Whether you work outdoors or indoors, knowing how to tread carefully on these surfaces is important.

Some things to remember about winter weather that will help prevent injury are:

* Wear weather appropriate footwear with solid tread soles
* Take your time, don't rush
* Make short strides
* Have parking lots shoveled or plowed
* Salt sidewalks, parking lots, and other highly traveled areas before working hours
* Remove any and all trip hazards
* Shady areas may remain iced longer during winter.

**Winter weather working conditions**

Construction work is often completed outdoors. When there are winter conditions in the forecast, you'll need to remember the following tips.

**Watch upcoming weather**

When you're prepared for winter weather, it's easier to manage. If you are not aware of what type of weather is coming, you my not have the necessary equipment or resources to provide your workers to help them stay warm and prevent illness and injuries. Watch the news and have a plan in place.

Workers should also know to wear appropriate clothing for current conditions.

**Limit exposure times**

When you work a job that requires you to be outdoors, you get used to the weather changes. However, it's important to always pay attention to what your body is telling you. If you are exposed to extreme temperatures for long periods of time, it can be harmful to your health.

Each employee should have a limit of exposure time. Break up workers into groups and switch them out periodically during cold weather. That way, workers can take breaks to warm up their body temperatures more frequently.

**Hypothermia and frostbite**

Workers who are outside in the winter elements need to be educated on cold stress risks. Hypothermia and frostbite can happen faster than many realize. When your workers know the warning signs and symptoms to watch for, they can better protect themselves and each other.

What is the difference between hypothermia and frostbite?

Hypothermia is more life-threatening and affects more of your body than frostbite does, but both conditions are serious and require professional medical attention. Here are more detailed definitions:

**Hypothermia**

Hypothermia affects the majority of your body. It is a state when you are no longer able to regulate your body heat, and you become too cold to properly function.

Your body temperature helps keep you alive, and if you do not have enough energy to sustain it, hypothermia can quickly become a very serious issue. Some of the warning signs of hypothermia are:

* Drowsiness
* Shivering
* Memory loss
* Slurred speech
* Confusion

**Frostbite**

When areas of your skin are exposed to freezing cold temperatures, frostbite can set in. This can even happen when clothing gets damp. The cells and tissue in the skin begin to die and do not receive blood adequate flow.

In some instances, frostbite can be treated, but in others amputation is required. Symptoms to watch for are:

* Numbness
* Tingling
* Discolored skin