

WATCH OUT FOR WINTER

Slips and falls

Ice, snow, slush, wet surfaces, and thaw-time mud present slip and fall hazards all around you. A slip on the ground can cost you broken bones and weeks off work. A slip at heights can cost you your life. Here's what to do:

- ✓ Clean work areas, access platforms (including scaffold planks), and stairways from ice and snow before you do anything.
- ✓ If you're a supervisor, direct your crew to take time throughout the day to clear work areas and walkways. This includes inside stairways that get covered in water and mud.
- ✓ Put down sand or salt. Turning icy planks over may not be enough, since ice often forms on the underside of material.
- ✓ Beware of hidden ice—under snow or in shadows. Surfaces can be free of ice in the sun but icy in the shade. It's often hard to see clear ice.
- ✓ Follow good housekeeping practices. Today's garbage can be hidden under tomorrow's snowfall, and cause someone to trip.
- ✓ Clean your boot soles when they become clogged with snow.
- ✓ Be especially careful when using ladders. Maintain three-point contact at all times (two hands and one foot or two feet and one hand on the ladder). Clean off the ladder. If you can, put your ladders under a shelter at night, so that they collect less ice on the rungs.
- ✓ Be aware that your extra clothing can lead to problems—gloves can interfere with your grip on a ladder or tool.
- ✓ Ensure you have 100% fall protection when working at heights.
- ✓ Be careful on roofs, especially in the morning when there can be new frost and snow.



- ✓ Keep at least one hand free when you're walking in case you slip. You can balance yourself or at least break your fall.
- ✓ If you'll be carrying something, make sure your route is clear before going.

Seeing and hearing

Winter clothing can sometimes be an obstacle. Your headwear can be a hazard if it prevents you from seeing or hearing hazards.

A sweatshirt hood can block your peripheral vision. Instead of wearing a hood, choose special headwear that can accommodate a hard hat. If you wear a hood, be particularly careful around moving equipment or vehicles—you may not see them coming from the sides.

HAZARDS



Equipment and vehicles

Falling or blowing snow can decrease a driver's visibility. Windshields and mirrors can get smeared with grime and salt. A driver may not be able to hear well when the windshield wipers are going and the heater is blowing. The best thing is to stay clear of vehicles, and walk well out of their paths. Otherwise, make eye contact with equipment operators and signal your intentions.

Vehicle operators should clear frost and snow completely from all windows, mirrors, and lights. Always use a signaler when backing up. Drive extra slowly when on jobsites, and look for workers in your blind spots.

When setting up signs and barriers for traffic control, allow extra distance so that motorists can spot warning signs and stop or slow down in time. Braking distance is greatly reduced in the winter.

Tarps, heaters, engines, and carbon monoxide

- ★ Carbon monoxide (CO) is a clear, colourless gas you can't smell or taste. You need a gas detector to warn you of the hazard.
- ★ It interferes with your body's ability to use oxygen. CO can kill you. The first signs of CO poisoning are headache and fatigue.
- ★ The major source in construction is engine exhaust. Gasoline, propane, and diesel engines all release CO. Heater exhaust contains CO. Some types of welding may produce it.
- ★ When CO is being produced in an area without adequate ventilation—such as a tarped-in work area—your life is in danger.
- ★ Choose an indirect-fired heater instead of a direct-fired heater when you want to heat an enclosed

space. An indirect-fired heater vents combustion by-products outdoors while ducting heated air indoors. A direct-fired heater (such as an open-flame or closed-flame heater) releases combustion by-products into the heated area.

- ★ Operate engines outdoors when possible. For example, welding machines and generators can be left outside—the leads can run into the building.
- ★ When engines must be operated indoors,
 - ✓ Choose electric rather than fuel-powered equipment.
 - ✓ Make sure the area is well-ventilated. Keep doors and windows open. Use fans to bring in fresh air. Vent exhaust outside.
 - ✓ Limit running time and don't let engines idle.
 - ✓ Monitor CO levels regularly with a gas detector.
 - ✓ If your controls are inadequate, use respiratory protection (supplied-air respirator).
- ★ When operating heavy equipment outside, open windows occasionally for fresh air.
- ★ Check propane vehicle-cab heaters for leaks and proper venting.

Cold stress

Cold stress includes frostbite (your flesh freezes) and hypothermia (your core body temperature drops). Here are some ways to prevent cold stress:

- ✓ Wear several layers of clothing instead of one thick layer
- ✓ Wear gloves, as well as head coverings that accommodate a hard hat.
- ✓ Wear thick socks, or at least two thin pairs of socks.
- ✓ If you get hot while working, open your jacket but keep your hat and gloves on.