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Safety Bulletin: December 2016

Let's Talk About Safety

Date _____

Location _____

Discussion Leader _____

Agenda: Cold Weather Hazards



Every year as the temperature drops there are a multitude of hazards which can significantly impact us, both at work and home. Lower temperatures and wind speed (wind chill) can put individuals at risk of cold stress as they work or travel outdoors. Cold conditions can make travel outdoors, both walking and driving, dangerous due to icy surfaces and blowing snow.

Cold Stress

The two main types of cold stress are hypothermia and frostbite. Hypothermia happens when a person's body loses heat faster than it can be produced for a prolonged period, causing a drop in internal temperature. Frostbite occurs when skin and tissue just below the skin freezes, usually from exposure to extreme cold and wind.

Hypothermia can be recognized by uncontrollable shivering, cold and blue skin, slowed respiration, confusion, drowsiness, slurred speech, loss of coordination, and slowed pulse.

Frostbite can be recognized by numbness, black, blue, pale, or waxy cold skin, as well as burning, prickling, or stinging sensation.

Prevention of these conditions can be accomplished by wearing appropriate clothing, including multiple layers if necessary, as well as removing damp clothing, and reducing the amount of skin exposed to the cold. Limiting the amount of time one spends outdoors during cold weather can significantly decrease the chances of being impacted by cold stress.

If someone begins to show signs of hypothermia or frostbite, the first action that should be taken is to get them to somewhere warm. Remove any wet clothing and wrap in dry blankets or towels to help retain body heat. For frostbitten hands or feet, remove any jewelry from the affected area and place clean pads between fingers or toes before wrapping in a clean towel or pad. In either circumstance, it is best to call 911 immediately.

Winter Travel

Winter weather commonly causes roads and outdoor walkways to become coated with ice and snow, and active storms can severely limit visibility. Whenever you travel outdoors during these conditions, ensure you take the proper precautions to avoid accidents.

Remove snow from driveways and walkways before traversing them, and treat icy surfaces with ice melt to increase traction. If you must use untreated roads or walkways, drive slowly or take small, penguin-like steps. Quick actions are most likely to result in a loss of control or balance, so stop or turn gradually and smoothly.

On vehicles, ensure that tires have proper tread-depth and pressure. Take the time to check batteries, hoses, belts, defroster, and wipers prior to traveling – it may be too late to check when you need them most.

If driving low-riding vehicles, beware of areas where snow or ice is mounded between tire ruts; your vehicle could become lodged in what is known as “high center” and leave your tires unable to gain traction. Having sand, cat litter, or ice melt on hand can help provide traction, but in an emergency, you may be able to place a car floor mat under a tire if you have nothing else available.

If your vehicle does become stuck on the road, having an emergency kit in your vehicle could help save your life. Kits commonly include: a flashlight; batteries; blankets; food and water; extra gloves, socks, and boots; as well as a basic first aid kit.

1. What safety problems have you observed on our jobs?

2. What job related injuries have we had since our last meeting?

3. Today's Topic:
