



Winter in Wisconsin is here. Inclement weather such as fog, ice and snow can negatively impact the performance of machinery and vehicles, as well as safety on the roads. Workers could be outdoors for up to twelve hours per day. All this can lead to a significant reduction in productivity and affect your overall profitability. It's a good idea to make sure your outdoor crew is 'Winterized'.

Contractors who are exposed to extreme weather conditions could face health risks including hypothermia, frostbite, trench foot, and in extreme cases even death. Additionally, your contractor safety could be seriously hampered by physical risks such as falls, slips, and trips due to bad weather conditions.

According to OSHA, employers have a responsibility to provide a work place free from hazards, including those caused by harsh winter weather. Related hazards, like slippery roads and surfaces, windy conditions, and damaged power lines may be taken for granted. Protect your contractors by teaching safe working practices and offering advice specifically related to winter conditions such as:

- ▶ **Preventing Cold Stress and injuries by choosing appropriate clothing**
- ▶ **Recognizing and monitoring the symptoms of Cold Stress in self and co-workers**
- ▶ **Monitoring weather conditions and reporting back to management**

The most valuable point is to recommend protective clothing necessary during bad weather. While there is no OSHA requirement for employers to provide workers with ordinary clothing such as those needed during the harsh winter months, it is your decision to provide gloves, jackets, raincoats, sunglasses, headwear and scarves if you deem them necessary. Here is a list of seasonal apparel:

1. Thermal insulated coveralls. The cover-

all design largely eliminates core body heat loss while affording good range of motion. They're a smart investment if you work outdoor in winter.

2. Helmet liners. Fleece-lined fabric is a comfortable insulator and effective at preserving neck and head heat. Keep spares on hand and wash the liners regularly. Liners are available in a range of size and coverage; the longer the better for protective coverage. Ski masks are not designed for use with a hard hat.

3. Glove selection. Fabric and texture need to be suited to the job, but try to find gloves that allow you to use a liner. Insulated mittens have been developed with various configurations for finger dexterity.

4. Eye protection. Wearing glasses can minimize heat loss, protect from cold, dry air, wind and dirt particles as well as flu virus.

5. Scarves. Very effective at protecting the neck and chest from heat loss, scarves allow easy adjustment or removal for cooling as needed.

6. Footwear. Choose double-layer thermal socks and insulated boots. If possible opt for a composite toe, which is almost as strong as "Steel toe".

7. Moisturize. To cover as much exposed skin as possible, use skin cream, moisturizer, barrier creams, etc. to stave off hypothermia and avoid frostbite.

For more ideas on minimizing business risks all year round, call **The Starr Group** at 1-414-421-3800 today. 📞

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