

The Dangers of Cold, Wintry Weather

Editor's note: Our Tailgate Training Tip Sheets are [available in Spanish at www.gemplers.com](http://www.gemplers.com).

KEY POINTS:

- Winter storms can be extremely dangerous.
- Shoveling snow is more strenuous than you may think.
- Always dress appropriately for the cold weather.

Note to trainer: Follow this script or use it to help guide you through a 10- to 15-minute tailgate training session for your ag/hort workers. You may photocopy this sheet for your employees' personal use. However, it may not be published or sold.



The hazards of cold weather

- Living or working in a part of the country where it gets extremely cold exposes you to certain dangers.
- Even if you're just visiting another part of the country during the cold winter months, it's important to know how to protect yourself.
- Some dangers associated with cold weather include: winter storms, wind chills, icy conditions, and cold-related injuries such as frostbite and hypothermia.
- Shoveling snow in cold weather carries certain risks, especially if you have a heart or other chronic condition, or aren't in good physical shape.

Storms and wind chills

- Winter storms, often accompanied by strong winds, extreme cold and heavy snow, can be very dangerous. Strong winds combined with heavy snow can knock down trees, telephone poles and power lines.
- Sometimes, winter storms are referred to as "ice storms." Ice storms are especially dangerous. The buildup of ice on utility poles and power lines can disrupt communications and knock out power for days.
- Icy conditions can result in personal injuries when vehicle drivers lose control on icy roads or people slip and fall. Black ice, a thin film of ice on pavement that's very difficult to see, is especially dangerous.
- During the winter months, weather forecasters in cold climates will refer to the "wind chill." The wind chill combines the wind speed with the outside temperature to tell you how cold it feels outdoors.
- Low wind chill numbers mean that any parts of your body that are exposed to the cold will lose heat at a faster rate than at the same temperature if the wind was absent. When the wind chill numbers are low, it's important to take special precautions to dress very warm before going outside.
- Animals can also be affected by low wind chills. Farm animals, just like people, need to be protected from extreme temperatures during the winter months.



Be sure you're in good physical shape before shoveling snow.



Driving in snow can be dangerous.

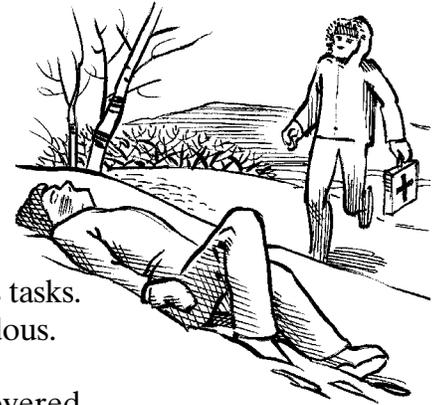
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See our [full line of safety supplies](#), including respirators, eye and ear protection, coveralls, first aid and more.

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Winter-related injuries

- There are a number of ways you can wind up seriously injured or ill during the cold winter months if you aren't careful. Here are a few:
 - **Injuries from shoveling snow.** People often don't dress properly for working in cold weather; injure their backs while shoveling; or overexert themselves and end up in the hospital. Heart attacks can also result from shoveling snow or from performing other strenuous tasks.
 - **Slips and falls.** Even a small amount of ice on the ground is hazardous. Failing to slow down can lead to slips, falls and broken bones.
 - **Vehicle accidents.** Driving a vehicle when the roads are snow-covered and icy is dangerous. It's important to slow down.
 - **Frostbite.** Frostbite, or the freezing of body tissue exposed to the cold, is a common cold-related injury. Because it has a numbing effect, you may not even realize you are frostbitten. Frostbite can result in the loss of such body parts as fingers, toes, hands, arms, feet or legs.
 - **Hypothermia.** Hypothermia occurs when your body loses heat faster than you can produce it. It can result in death. Warning signs include increased shivering, slurred speech, impaired judgment, and poor muscle coordination. Immediately call for professional emergency medical help.



Serious cold-related injuries such as hypothermia need immediate medical attention.

Important cold weather tips

1. Always dress appropriately for the cold weather. It's best to wear several layers of loose-fitting, lightweight, warm clothing. Be sure your outer jacket repels water and cuts the wind. Also, wear a [warm hat](#) that covers your ears, a scarf or [ski mask](#) to protect your face, [gloves](#) or [mittens](#), dry [socks](#), and dry [shoes or boots](#).
2. Eat adequately before working outdoors in the cold. Also, drink plenty of fluids so you don't become dehydrated. But avoid drinks with caffeine such as colas, coffee and caffeinated tea. Also avoid alcohol, which increases the rate at which your body loses heat.
3. Make sure you are in good physical shape. Don't overexert yourself.
4. Keep your skin dry. Wet skin freezes faster than dry skin.
5. Be extra careful driving in winter. It's a good idea to have a portable radio, [first aid supplies](#) and extra warm clothing or blankets in your vehicle.



Avoid alcohol, cigarettes and coffee in cold outdoor weather.

Are there any questions?

Note to trainer: Take time to answer trainees' questions. Then review the Winter Weather Do's and Don'ts.

WINTER WEATHER DO'S AND DON'TS

DO:

- Take breaks from working outdoors in the cold.
- Drink enough water to avoid dehydration.
- Know how to call for professional emergency medical help if needed.

DON'T:

- Shovel snow or perform other strenuous outdoor tasks if you are in poor physical shape.
- Drive in snowy conditions if you're not used to it.
- Wear wet clothing in the cold.

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