

Weather can often be unpredictable and extreme, causing unseen risks and situations. In such temperamental weather, extreme freezing temperatures can create serious health problems. Near freezing weather and strong winds can cause a person to lose body heat much quicker than normal. These two drastic weather conditions are the two major factors that lead to "cold stress".

The symptoms of cold stress are brought on by exposure when working long periods of time in extreme cold, or when working in poorly insulated or heated areas. Those that are unaccustomed to freezing weather are more likely to experience cold stress.

Chilblains: Chilblains are also known as "Pernio" and "Perniosis". This is another cold stress issue that can be caused by temperatures between freezing and 60 (°F). Chilblains are caused by repeated prolonged exposure of skin to cold temperatures. It can cause permanent damage to the capillary beds in the skin. This could lead to reoccurring redness and itching when exposed to cold weather. It often affects the body's extremities: face, hands, and ears, as well as any areas that are unprotected from cold temperatures.

Protect your employees! Follow these helpful tips to prevent cold stress from affecting workers:

- When scheduling routine repairs and maintenance consider the month of the year and time of day. Schedule cold jobs for warmer times. Look at the weather forecast, checking for a break in the weather.
- Reduce the physical demands by assigning additional workers for extra-long and demanding jobs. Set up a warm area with warm beverages for workers to take breaks and rest.
- Monitor and train workers who are at risk for cold stress. Give them information about inherent risks, prevention, symptoms, available treatment, and required personal protective equipment.

Recommendations for workers to stay warm and safe:

- Wear appropriate clothing, such as wearing multiple layers of loose clothing.
- Protect the ears, face, hands and feet by wearing a hat and waterproofed and insulated boots.
- During breaks, move to a warm area and limit your time outside.
- Always carry cold weather gear, such as extra socks, gloves, hats, jackets, blankets, a change of clothes, and a thermos of hot liquid.
- Drink water, it is surprising that you can become dehydrated. Drinking liquid keeps your body functioning.
- Avoid touching cold metal surfaces with bare skin.
- Be aware and monitor yourself and your coworkers for signs of cold stress.

Let's be safe out there!