

COMPLETE GUIDE

ON HOW TO

PROTECT WORKERS IN A COLD ENVIRONMENT

- **Recognise the environmental and workplace conditions** that may pose health and safety risks for workers.
- **Spread awareness** on the signs and symptoms of cold-induced illnesses and injuries.
- Make sure that workers are **aware of the proper clothing**, safe work practices, physical fitness requirements, and emergency procedures in case of cold injury.
- Educate workers about the **complete and proper clothing to wear** for harsh weather conditions. Wool and synthetic fibres are better than cotton which tends to get damp and lose its insulating properties.
- Provide personal heaters and shielding or heated enclosures. **Make sure workers can warm up** in heated warming rooms or shelters like tents, cabins, or rest rooms.
- Allow frequent short breaks to **prevent prolonged sitting/standing** and avoid exhaustion or fatigue.
- **Implement a 'buddy system'** so that they can look after each other and watch out for symptoms of hypothermia.
- **Assign or schedule workers** with poor physical condition on warmer days or more enclosed/less exposed areas of the workplace.
- Provide the proper selection of tools, equipment, and machinery that can **withstand extreme temperature** so workers can perform their jobs faster and more efficiently.
- **Plan the work schedule carefully**, including the schedule of breaks. Find out the warmest part of the day and schedule the work on that period.
- Make sure that **work is paced to avoid excessive sweating** as this can result to damp clothing and low metabolic heat.
- Give new employees enough time to get used or **acclimatized to cold and protective clothing** before giving them a full workload.
- Carefully **consider proper equipment design**. Make sure that metal handles and bars are covered in thermal insulating material.
- Tools should be designed so that they can be used **without having to remove mittens** or gloves.
- Provide separate **protection for the eyes and nose or mouth** because the exhaled moisture will fog and frost eye shields.
- Provide balanced meals as these are essential to **maintain body heat and prevent dehydration**.
- **Provide fluids** when they are doing strenuous work. Hot beverages or soup are best for warming purposes.
- Advise workers to **avoid drinking too much coffee**. Caffeinated drinks increase urine production and contribute to dehydration. They also increase blood flow at the skin surface which may lower body heat.
- **Prohibit alcohol use** on or before a worker's shift starts as it impairs the body's ability to regulate temperature, increasing the risk of hypothermia.
- Make sure that the air speed in refrigerated rooms do not exceed **1 meter per second**.
- **Monitor and record the temperature changes** in the workplace with a thermometer at least every 4 hours.
- **Outline a procedure for providing first aid** and obtaining medical care. Assign one trained person for each shift to attend in case of emergencies.



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