



OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH

An informational quarterly newsletter.

WORKING IN COLD WEATHER

Winter has arrived in Montana, creating challenging working conditions.

Remember: *Low Temperatures + Wind Speed + Wet Conditions = Injury and Illness*

- During 20° F + 20 MPH winds = freezing to exposed skin within **1 hour**
- During 5° F + 20 MPH winds = freezing to exposed skin within **1 minute**

Safety Tips:

- Take frequent breaks to warm-up during cold weather conditions
- Wear breathable layers, warm hats, and insulated waterproof boots & gloves to protect the ears, face, hands, and feet
- Avoid touching cold metal surfaces with bare skin
- Try to avoid working when fatigued: energy is needed to keep muscles warm
- Drink as much water as you would in the summer to prevent dehydration
- Have a way to communicate with workers in remote locations
- If possible, schedule work during the warmest part of the day
- Provide warm liquids to drink during breaks, avoiding caffeine or alcohol
- Prevent slips, trips, and falls on snow and ice by taking shorter, slower steps and wearing footwear with good traction and insulation

COLD WEATHER INJURIES IN MONTANA

66 work-related injuries related to cold weather occurred January 2013-December 2017 in Montana, based on workers' compensation claims data.

- **27%** of cold-weather injuries affected the worker's **fingers**
- **18%** of cold-weather injuries affected the worker's **foot**
- **94%** of the injuries were **frostbite** or other effects of exposure to low temperatures

Transportation and Warehousing was the industry with the most cold-weather injury claims (17% of claims), followed by Construction (11%) and Mining, Quarrying, and Oil & Gas Extraction (11%).

December 2016 saw more cold-weather injuries (12 injuries) than any other month since January 2013.

Sources:

"Out in the Cold" by Alan Ferguson, Safety & Health Magazine, November 25, 2017

OSHA Quick Card—Protecting Workers from Cold Stress

Montana Department of Labor & Industry Workers' Compensation Data

NOTEWORTHY NEWS

[Sign up](#) for free safety training at SafetyFestMT in Kalispell: January 8-11!

Health & Safety Resources:

["Protecting Yourself from Cold Stress"](#) - symptoms and first aid facts about hypothermia, frostbite, trench foot, and chilblains

[Work/Warm-up Schedule](#) - recommendations on when to schedule work-breaks in cold weather

Visit our website

<http://mtworkerhealth.mt.gov>

for more information and updates!

If you have questions or comments, please contact:

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