Toolbox talk

Cold stress

Dressing for cold work, the signs of hypothermia and frostbite, and what to do when you see them.

When it's cold, your body loses heat faster than it can make it, and wind and wet clothes speed that up. This talk covers how to dress, how to spot hypothermia and frostbite in yourself and the person next to you, and what to do about it.

Key point **Shivering that stops is an emergency. It does not mean the person has warmed up.**

Dress for the work

Wear several loose layers instead of one heavy coat, so you can take one off before you sweat. Wet clothing pulls heat out of you fast. Keep your ears, face, hands and feet covered, and wear a hat or liner under your hard hat.

Boots should be waterproof and insulated. Keep spare socks, gloves and a dry layer in the truck. Don't grab cold metal with bare hands.

Know the signs of hypothermia

Hypothermia means your body temperature has dropped too low. Early signs are shivering, being worn out, clumsy hands and feet, and confusion. Later, the shivering stops, the skin turns blue, and breathing and pulse slow down.

The person usually can't tell it's happening, because the cold affects their thinking. That's why you watch each other.

Know the signs of frostbite

Frostbite is skin and tissue freezing. It hits fingers, toes, ears, nose and cheeks first. Watch for numbness, tingling or stinging, aching, and skin that looks pale, waxy or bluish.

Wet feet lose heat about 25 times faster than dry feet. Change wet socks as soon as you can. Feet that stay wet can be injured even at 60°F.

What to do

For hypothermia, tell your supervisor and call for medical help. Get the person somewhere warm, take off wet clothing and wrap them up. Give warm drinks only if they are awake, and never alcohol.

For frostbite, get inside and warm the area with body heat or warm water, never hot. Don't rub it, and keep it away from heaters and heat lamps. Numb skin burns without the person feeling it.

Ask the crew

1. Where is the warm-up spot on this site today, and when are we taking breaks?
2. What dry socks, gloves and layers do you have with you right now?
3. Who are you paired with today, and what would you do if they started acting confused?

Crew sign-in

Cold stress

Date _____ **Site or project** _____

Presented by _____ **Company** _____

#	Name (print)	Signature	Crew or company
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			
11			
12			
13			
14			
15			
16			
17			
18			

Signing means you attended this talk and had the chance to ask questions.