

Whether you're working outdoors in the blistering sun, huddled against the winter chill, or you notice dark clouds on the horizon, there are plenty of weather conditions that can create a hazardous working environment.

- It's important to be aware of the risks posed by different weather elements, including heat exhaustion, frostbite, wind damage, lightning strikes, and more.



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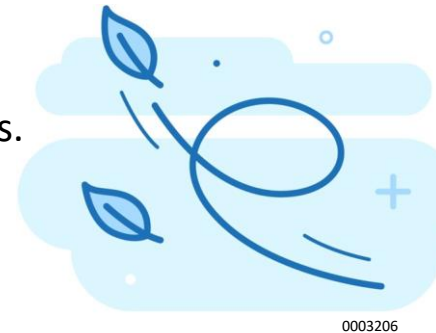
When the job is primarily outdoors, workers do get used to dealing with the safety concerns of a variety of weather conditions that happen throughout the year. But outdoor workers should know ahead of time where to go if the weather turns dangerous and they need to get to safety.

- A weather event that requires shelter-in-place may happen quickly, without much warning, so it's important to know the emergency procedures in advance.
- If safe building structures are not accessible, workers can seek shelter in hard-topped metal vehicles with the windows rolled up.

Because every work location may experience a wide range of weather conditions, take the opportunity to review how to stay safe during the weather events that may happen in your area.

When windy weather begins to make an impact on work at the job site, it can be annoying at first, but things can turn dangerous quickly.

- Stop crane operations and work at heights if the wind speeds are too high.
- Secure all temporary structures, scaffolding, ladders, equipment, and materials.
- Store tools away or use tethers to avoid falling object hazards.
- Wear eye protection when dust and debris are flying.
- If hardhats are required, use the chin strap to ensure it can't be blown off.
- When continuing work in heavier winds consider wearing a harness connected to an anchor point.
- Avoid carrying or lifting large objects in blustery weather, like plywood, that can act as a sail when they catch the wind, causing dangerous fall hazards.



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During storms or high winds, OSHA prohibits:

- work on or from scaffolds
- crane hoists
- work on top of walls

Scaffolding work may continue if a qualified person determines it is safe and personal fall protection or wind screens are provided.

Crane hoists may proceed only if a qualified person determines it is safe.

Before and during outdoor work, check local weather reports and keep an eye out for darkening clouds and increasing wind speeds, which can indicate developing thunderstorms.

- Lightning is unpredictable and can strike outside the heaviest rainfall areas or even up to 10 miles away from any rainfall.
- Many lightning victims are caught outside during a storm because they did not act promptly to get to a safe place, or they go back outside too soon after a storm has passed.

If there are signs of an approaching thunderstorm, workers should not begin any task that they cannot quickly stop if they need to get to safety. If you hear thunder when working outdoors, even a distant rumble, get to a safe place immediately.

**Rubber-soled shoes and rubber tires do not provide protection from lightning.**

To decrease your risk of being struck by lightning:

- Avoid water, and immediately get out of and away from bodies of water. Water does not attract lightning, but it is a good conductor of electricity.
- Lightning is likely to strike the tallest objects in a given area—you should not be the tallest object.
- Avoid wiring, plumbing, and fencing. Lightning can travel long distances through metal. Stay away from metal objects, equipment, and surfaces that can conduct electricity.



When temperatures rise, heat stress becomes a major concern.

- According to OSHA, 50% to 70% of outdoor fatalities occur in the first few days of working in warm or hot environments because the body needs to build a tolerance to the heat gradually over time.
- The process of building tolerance is called heat acclimatization. Lack of acclimatization represents a major risk factor for fatal outcomes.

Getting too hot can make you sick causing heat-related illnesses like heat cramps, heat exhaustion, and heat stroke. Dehydration is also common in the summer heat and can cause a lack of energy, irritability, headache, constipation, or dizziness, all of which can impact a worker's productivity and safety.

- Start drinking water before you arrive to work and keep drinking water throughout the day. Don't wait until you are thirsty to drink.
- Avoid drinks with caffeine or a lot of sugar. Consume sports drinks with electrolytes during activities that cause heavy sweating.
- Take breaks in the shade, especially during periods of high heat and humidity.
- Pace your activity by starting slow and increasing the intensity gradually.
- At the first signs of heat illness, which might include dizziness, nausea, headaches, muscle cramps, or similar, move to a cooler location to rest and slowly drink a cool beverage. Seek medical attention immediately if you do not begin to feel better.



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When working outdoors in cold weather, it's important to dress warmly. Dressing in layers allows workers to remove outer wear more easily when moving from outdoors to indoors.

- Be aware of how your clothing affects your senses and adjust accordingly. Winter clothing should keep you warm but should not impair your hearing, sight, or “feel” for equipment controls or manual work tasks.



Slips and falls are common when ice is a safety hazard at the worksite. The effects of freezing and thawing when temperatures change can lead to dangerously slippery surfaces.

- Wear proper work boots with rough or heavy treads when working in wintry conditions.
- Be careful climbing stairs or ramps. Steps, grab holds, and grip plates may be slippery.
- Take short steps and walk at a slower pace to react quickly to changes in traction.
- Clean up the worksite before a snowfall to ensure hazards don't get buried in the snow making them effectively invisible.

Getting too cold can make you sick causing cold stress illnesses like hypothermia and frostbite.

- Wear insulated gloves in cold weather. Avoid touching frozen metal surfaces with bare hands, which can cause serious tissue damage.
- Stay dry in the cold because moisture or dampness, even from sweating, can increase the rate of heat loss from the body. Keep extra clothing handy in case your work clothes get wet.
- Seek help immediately if you notice a co-worker exhibiting cold stress symptoms like uncontrolled shivering, slurred speech, clumsy movements, fatigue, or confused behavior.



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