



SAFETY TIP OF THE WEEK

FOR THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY



Company _____ Date _____

To encourage all of us to promote safety on a continuing basis, the Builders Exchange publishes a safety tip in each issue of the weekly **Bulletin**. The superintendent/foreman of each job should use this safety tip in a short safety meeting Monday morning. We suggest that this 5-to-10 minute meeting be just before lunch or perhaps right after the morning break. You can then emphasize the SAFETY TIP OF THE WEEK all week long.

KEEPING WARM ON THE CONSTRUCTION SITE

Week Ending 12/07/18

Winter is right around the corner and we all know that construction work doesn't get put on ice when the mercury starts dropping. Working in the cold can be dangerous if you don't take the necessary precautions to keep your body warm and dry on the construction site.

Know the signs. Cold stress occurs when the body is unable to warm itself and can lead to hypothermia and frostbite. **Hypothermia** occurs when your core body temperature falls below 95°F. Common symptoms include shivering, shallow breathing, confusion, loss of coordination, drowsiness, slurred speech and slow, weak pulse. If someone is showing symptoms of hypothermia it is imperative to get their core temperature back up. Remove all wet clothing and move the person to a dry, warm area. Use blankets, additional clothing and heating pads to increase their temperature. If conscious they should be given warm liquids to drink. CPR should be given immediately to an unconscious hypothermic person or one who has no pulse or isn't breathing and 911 should be called for emergency medical service. **Frostbite** occurs when body tissue freezes and is most common in the extremities as these areas tend to have less blood flow when exposed to cold temperatures. Color changes in the affected tissue and loss of normal sensation are typical signs of frostbite. Rewarm frostbitten areas with warm water. Avoid rubbing the areas to warm it up and do not use heating pads to try and warm the affected areas. Call 911 and get medical treatment immediately if affected by frostbite.

Safety first. Hold a safety meeting on days when the forecast calls for extremely cold temperatures to hammer home the dangers of cold stress, hypothermia and frostbite. Make sure your workers are dressed appropriately for the cold. Have your workers buddy up to check in on each other at frequent intervals since hypothermia can cause confusion which in addition could lead to them not recognizing they are suffering from it but also lead to other accidents.

Layer up. The general rule of thumb here is putting on at least three layers. The base layer of clothing should have moisture wicking properties to draw the sweat away from your body. The second layer should be made of breathable material that will help to insulate the body such as fleece. The outermost layer should protect you from the elements. This means something that is windproof and waterproof. You want to make sure that your layers fit well and allow for a full range of motion without exposing you to the cold.

Cover your head. While it is a myth that most of your body heat is lost through your head that's no excuse not to keep your noggin warm. A good knit cap or ski mask for keeping your ears and face warm. Get a good fleece liner that covers the back of your neck when working in your hard hat. Don't forget the Chapstick to keep your lips from drying out and cracking.

Protect the extremities. We're talking hands and feet here and they tend to get cold first because as our body temperatures start to drop the brain constricts the blood vessels in our extremities in order to increase blood flow in our core. A good pair of gloves along with wool socks and insulated boots can keep all the digits nice and toasty. Steel toe boots act as a "cold sink" so consider getting a pair of composite toe boots for the winter months. A pair of hand warmers in your pockets is a great way to keep warm when working with gloves on might not be an option.

Stay dry. If your clothes get wet and the moisture stays on your skin it will lower your body temperature. This is why it is important for your base layer to wick moisture away from your body and that your outer layer is waterproof to keep moisture from getting in. It's also a good idea to have spare socks, gloves, hats, hard hat liners, etc. on hand so you can change them out should they get wet.

Enclose your workspace. Obviously, this isn't always an option for every construction type and every jobsite. Enclosing a jobsite can be as simple as tacking up plastic sheeting over openings such as open doorways and window cutouts to prefabricated, modular panel systems and tents. This will keep the wind from breaking in and keeps the heat from escaping the workspace.

Artificial heat. Get a good electric heater if you are working indoors or one of those big propane heaters that puts out radiant heat to gather around when working outdoors. If enclosing the workspace or providing heaters isn't an option, consider setting up a heated trailer or temporary building on-site so that workers take breaks from the cold and warm up for a few minutes throughout the day.

Fuel your body with something warm. Make sure you have a thermos of your hot beverage of choice handy to warm you up. Get a good hot meal at lunchtime or bring an extra thermos full of soup. Your body expends a lot of energy when working in the cold so it's important to keep it fueled up. Consider having an extra meal during the day or doubling up on portions on colder days.

Keep moving. The body generates heat through movement. It's important that when you are working outside in the cold that you constantly keep moving. This shouldn't be a problem with some of the strenuous tasks associated with construction work. Of course, if your body movement starts generating too much heat it's going to cause sweating which as we already discussed can be bad. Try to find that happy medium between enough clothes and enough movement to stay warm and dry.

Special Topics for this Job: _____

MSDS # _____ **Reviewed – Title:** _____

Present at Meeting:

Supervisor's Signature: _____

Note: These SAFETY TIPS OF THE WEEK are to help members provide a safe workplace and to instruct employees in ways to prevent accidents. Ensure you record the names of those who attend your safety meetings, and file this form with your permanent accident prevention records.