



TOOLBOX TALK- *Weather – 004 – Cold weather – project impact*

November 2021

This toolbox talk is one of a series of toolbox talks relating to the weather. These are intended to be used as individual toolbox talks as is relevant.

- 001 - General
- 002 – High winds
- 003 - Cold and damp weather – personal impact
- 004 – Cold and damp weather – project impact
- 005 - Hot weather
- 006 – Losing daylight – clock changes

As the weather becomes colder and wetter during winter months, construction workers who work outside face the hazard of exposure to the cold. That aspect of winter weather is covered in a separate toolbox talk.

This toolbox talk relates to the changes that the cold and wet can bring to the environment that increases risks and the associated control measures required.

The project management team and the Supervisors will plan for these conditions and monitor weather forecasts. However, everybody can assist through making suggestions or raising issues when seen.

Statistics show that slips, trips and falls increase in the winter.

Rain. Surfaces will become slippery particularly if there is a substance such as oil also on the surface. Where we are working on earth this can become a mud bath. Work areas may need to be cleared of mud and improved for instance, by crushed concrete or roadstone.

Rain causes other issues such as material becomes slippery (for example steel). Do you need different or fresh dry gloves?

Standing water can be an issue if there is an object that someone stands on and it moves on top of the water. We can eliminate slipping hazards by sweeping water out of low areas particularly those used as access routes.

Snow, ice, and frost will also create slippery surfaces. Before the shift starts all these areas must be identified, cleared, or treated, for instance by removing snow or spreading salt. If the area cannot be made safe, then it must be placed into an exclusion zone. Don't forget that melting snow can either refreeze or create lying water.

The cold can create other hazards:

- Grip could be lost when handling tools, equipment, and materials. Do you need fresh dry gloves? Would the task be better carried out with more people?
- Services, plant, and equipment can become frozen. If you anticipate this could be an issue let your supervisor know

Poor visibility can become an issue making access more hazardous. For instance, because of fog, heavy rain, or snow. Take additional care and time to ensure you know that where you are walking is safe. Also, if you have difficulty seeing others will have difficulty seeing you. This is particularly important when crossing vehicle routes or working with plant. Take extra care to be seen and get the thumbs up from vehicle drivers and plant operators as acknowledgement that they have seen you. Plant operators and vehicle drivers must also take extra care, not only because of pedestrians but because of poor visibility of edges, slopes and objects.

If you do become aware of an issue please report immediately to your supervisor. You may be aware of it and take precautions but someone else may not. Please help to look out for us all.