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# Safety Focused



Prolonged time spent working in the cold may result in serious occupational ailments, such as frostbite, hypothermia and trench foot.

Presented by

## Working Safely in Cold Weather

Winter weather poses a number of safety risks, particularly for employees who spend a lot of time working outdoors. Prolonged time in the cold may result in serious ailments or even death. Injuries and illnesses associated with exposure to extreme cold include:

- **Frostbite**—This condition occurs when the skin is exposed to cold or windy weather or comes into contact with cold objects or surfaces. Common symptoms include numbness; red skin with grey, white or bluish patches; hardened skin; and skin that blisters after being warmed.
- **Hypothermia**—This condition occurs when your body temperature drops below 32 degrees Celsius (89.6 degrees Fahrenheit). Symptoms include shivering, confusion, brain fog, slow breathing, low energy or fatigue, bright red skin, loss of coordination and slurred speech.
- **Trench foot**—This condition occurs when the foot is exposed to wet and cold temperatures for a prolonged period of time. Common symptoms include swelling; numbness; cold, blotchy and red skin; itching or burning sensations in the foot; and a feeling of heaviness in the appendage.

Any employees who can't avoid working outdoors in cold temperatures may be at risk of these ailments. The likelihood of cold weather-related injuries and illnesses may be heightened among workers who take certain medications, are in poor physical condition or have specific health problems (e.g., diabetes, high blood pressure and heart disease). To keep yourself safe while working in cold weather, consider the following tips:

- Wear several layers of loose clothing.
- Ensure your ears, face, hands and feet are protected.
- Wear waterproof and insulated boots.
- Take frequent, short breaks in warm areas.
- Drink hot beverages and eat warm, high-calorie foods before working and during breaks.
- Learn the signs and symptoms of cold weather-related ailments to help identify them in yourself and among co-workers on the job.

Talk to your supervisor for more information on working safely in cold weather.





## The Dangers of Presenteeism

Presenteeism in the workplace occurs when an employee comes to work despite feeling tired or unwell, considerably reducing their productivity. This problem is especially common among remote or hybrid employees, as they are more likely to not feel the need to take sick leave when they're feeling unwell. It is also common among older workers, workers suffering from insomnia or mental health issues (e.g., anxiety and depression), and those with unhealthy lifestyles.

Employees who fear losing their jobs or missing out on career opportunities are more likely to come to work or refuse to take paid time off when they feel unwell. This is particularly true when employees believe their work can't be easily transferred or covered without consequences to quality, completion times or interpersonal relationships.

However, even if it feels like you simply cannot miss work, it's important that you talk to your supervisor about it instead of falling into presenteeism patterns. Moreover, showing up to work while unwell can lead to the following issues:

- Increased stress and fatigue
- Worsened mental health
- Lowered morale and cognitive function
- Increased recovery time after injuries and illnesses

Furthermore, presenteeism can increase the risk of near-misses and accidents on the job—thus posing significant workplace safety concerns. To avoid presenteeism, consider the following tips:

- Don't come to work if you feel unwell.
- Take paid time off as needed.
- Consider modifying your work schedule to better fit your needs.
- Eat a well-balanced, low-fat diet and exercise regularly to keep your body healthy and boost your mood.
- Improve your sleep schedule by establishing a consistent bedtime routine, passing on coffee after midday and avoiding electronics before bedtime.
- Practise self-care by taking time to do activities that you enjoy.

Consult your supervisor for more information on the dangers of presenteeism.