

Cold Weather: Check Warmth, Traction and Recovery

Todd Jerome Jenkins | v1.0 | Reviewed October 6, 2026 | Discussion + field checks

Why this matters

Cold protection depends on more than a coat. Wind, wet clothing, long exposure and a recovery area that is unavailable can change the job. Check the arrangements where the crew will actually work.

Objective: Verify cold-weather protection and explain when to stop for changing conditions or symptoms.

Key hazards or failure points

Wind and wetness; reduced dexterity; slippery routes; inadequate recovery; fatigue; clothing interfering with PPE; unsafe heating; missed signs of cold stress.

Practical controls

- Plan work around expected conditions and exposure. Provide suitable warm, dry recovery space, breaks, replacement dry clothing and drinking water. The employer sets the schedule using the actual risks and applicable requirements.
- Use clothing and footwear suited to the weather and task. Check compatibility with required PPE and safe movement. Arrange coworker checks and a prompt way to report symptoms.
- Prepare access routes and remove or control ice through the site's safe method. Use approved heating arrangements; fuel-burning equipment can introduce fire and carbon-monoxide hazards.

Verify It in the Field

Before exposure, check the forecast and actual wind, wetness and route conditions. Confirm the recovery space is open, usable and reachable. Identify who will provide relief and when conditions will be reviewed.

In a safe area, check that clothing and gloves allow required movement and control operation without compromising protection. Confirm dry replacements are available. Do not handle hazardous equipment to test cold-impaired dexterity.

Have the responsible person verify heater suitability, placement and ventilation against the actual instructions and applicable requirements. Confirm the emergency contact method. Record the conditions, checks, break arrangements and review triggers; do not assume a cracked door makes combustion equipment safe.

Stop and reassess

Stop exposure for uncontrolled shivering, numbness, loss of coordination, wet protection that cannot be replaced, or failed recovery/access arrangements. Confusion, slurred speech or suspected hypothermia require emergency help. Move the person to warmth safely, follow emergency instructions and reassess the work before restart.

Ask the crew

1. Where is our usable warm, dry recovery area today?
2. What could make our clothing or footing inadequate?
3. What symptoms or changes mean we stop and get help?

Before exposure: check the recovery arrangements as carefully as the work.

Sources: OSHA Winter Weather—Cold Stress; NIOSH Cold and Work; OSHA 1926.154.

Free next step: [JHA/JSA planning & field-verification worksheet](#)

Expanded guidance, references, supervisor check and attendance record accompany this talk.