Heat and cold stress

Choose the controls for today's conditions

Review the employer's temperature-exposure plan, required PPE and emergency arrangements. Heat hazards can occur indoors or outdoors. Cold stress can occur above freezing, especially when clothing is wet.

Cold-weather work

Wear loose-fitting layers suitable for the task, insulated gloves and footwear, and protection from wind and rain. Bring dry replacement clothing. Identify a warm, dry break area and plan frequent recovery breaks. Consider scheduling demanding work for the warmer part of the day. Use a buddy system; report shivering, poor coordination, confusion or unusual behavior.

Heat-exposed work

Make cool drinking water easy to reach and encourage frequent drinking, not only when thirsty. OSHA recommends access to electrolyte-containing fluids for work lasting two hours or more. Identify shade or another cool recovery area. Increase break length and frequency as heat stress rises. Workload, environment and required clothing all matter. New or returning heat-exposed workers need a gradual increase in exposure and extra support.

Heat emergency: call 911 and cool immediately

Confusion, slurred speech or unconsciousness are signs of heat stroke. Call 911 immediately. Move the worker to a cooler area and begin active cooling with cold water or ice while waiting for help. Stay with the worker. Do not wait to decide which heat illness it is. When in doubt, cool the worker and call 911.

Cold emergency: get urgent help

If hypothermia is suspected and the worker is confused, has poor coordination or is getting worse, call 911 immediately. Move the worker to a warm place, replace wet clothes with dry clothes and cover the body, head and neck with blankets without covering the face. Follow dispatch instructions. For suspected frostbite, protect the area, do not rub it and seek medical help; do not try to rewarm it before getting medical help.

Ask the crew before starting

- Where are our water, recovery area and dry replacement clothing?
- Who checks each worker, and how do we report symptoms?
- Who calls 911? What is our exact location and access route?
- What change in conditions means stop and review the plan?

Record today's plan

Task / conditions: _____

Controls / person responsible: _____

Emergency location / access: _____

Sources and limits

OSHA guidance: Cold Stress Guide; Water. Rest. Shade.; Heat-Related Illnesses and First Aid. Clickable links. Reviewed November 3, 2026. Check current federal, state and local requirements and employer procedures for the actual job. These prompts are not temperature limits.

General safety information only. This discussion aid does not replace required training, a site-specific hazard assessment, medical advice or emergency care. Attendance is not proof of competence.

Separate attendance sheet: toolboxtalk.com/toolbox-talk-template/