

Safety Talk

WINTER HAZARDS

Carbon monoxide

- Carbon monoxide (CO) is a clear, colourless gas you can't smell or taste. You need a gas detector to warn you of the hazard.
- The major source in construction is engine exhaust. Gasoline, propane, and diesel engines all release CO. Heater exhaust contains CO. Some types of welding produce it.
- When CO is produced in an area without adequate ventilation, your life is in danger.
- It interferes with your body's ability to use oxygen. CO can kill you. The first signs of CO poisoning are headache and fatigue.
- Operate engines outdoors when possible. For example, welding machines and generators can be left outside—the leads can run into the building.
- When engines must be operated indoors,
 - ✓ choose electric rather than fuel-powered equipment.
 - ✓ make sure the area is well-ventilated. Keep doors and windows open. Use fans to bring in fresh air. Vent exhaust outside.
 - ✓ limit running time and don't let engines idle.
 - ✓ monitor CO levels regularly with a gas detector.
 - ✓ use respiratory protection (supplied-air respirator) if your controls are inadequate.
- When operating heavy equipment outside, open windows occasionally for fresh air.
- Check vehicle-cab propane heaters for leaks and proper venting.

Ice and snow

- Falls are a major hazard in all seasons. In winter, ice and snow increase the risk. Clean ice and snow from access areas and work platforms. Make sure that stairs, ladders, and scaffold planks are clear.
- Use sand, salt, or other de-icing material to prevent slips and falls. Simply turning icy planks over may not be enough because ice often forms on the underside of planks and other platform materials.
- Watch your footing. Steel beams, decks, and platforms may be clear in sunny areas but icy in the shade. The same goes for plywood decks.
- Remove icicles, especially when the temperature starts to warm up. If icicles can't be removed, rope off the area below them and put up warning signs.
- Clear frost and snow completely from all windows, mirrors, and lights on vehicles and heavy equipment.
- When possible, keep your arms free to cushion a fall.
- When setting up signs and barriers for traffic control, allow extra distance so that motorists can spot warning signs and slow down or stop in time. Visibility and braking distance can be greatly reduced in winter.

Cold stress

Cold stress includes frostbite (your flesh freezes) and hypothermia (your core body temperature drops). Here are some ways to prevent cold stress:

- ✓ Wear several layers of clothing instead of one thick layer.
- ✓ Wear gloves, as well as head coverings that accommodate a hard hat.
- ✓ Wear thick socks, or at least two thin pairs of socks.
- ✓ If you get hot while working, open your jacket but keep your hat and gloves on.

