

## Cold Weather in the Workplace

*Tis' the season to not be freezin'*

Cold weather is a potentially dangerous situation that can affect those who work outdoors or work in areas that are poorly insulated or without heat. When exposed to increased wind speeds and extreme cold temperatures, heat can leave the body more quickly, leading to a variety of cold stress conditions.

A cold work environment forces the body to work harder to maintain its core temperature of 98.6 degrees F. Cold stress occurs from a drop in skin temperature and eventually internal body temperature which can lead to frostbite, hypothermia, and trench foot. Common risk factors include dressing improperly, poor physical/health conditions, and exhaustion. Below are a few reminders to protect yourself from cold weather conditions:

### *Slippery surfaces*

Here at Northwestern, there have been 11 injuries in the past 5 years involving slips and falls on ice, sleet, or snow. These injuries resulted in 15 lost days, 79 restricted days, and \$55,191.70 in costs to the university. To prevent slips and falls on slippery surfaces, wear proper footwear, plan ahead, a,

### **For Additional Information**

Contact Gwen Butler, Director, Environmental Health & Safety, at 847.491.4936

Do you or your team have a safety story you'd like to share? Contact Risk Management at [gwen.butler@northwestern.edu](mailto:gwen.butler@northwestern.edu) for details.