

# RISK ALERT

## SURVIVING THE COLD

*Working outside during winter can be a chilling experience. For workers, cold weather can be a serious hazard. Construction, trucking, farming and logging are examples of occupations where the potential for hypothermia and frostbite exists. There are also safety problems associated with working in cold environments – ice, snow, burns from contact with cold metal, slowed reaction time and snow blindness.*

### Wearing appropriate clothing is essential to retain body heat. Remember:

- You are properly clothed for the outdoors, if you can work comfortably.
- Protecting yourself from the cold should not interfere with the use of your personal protective equipment.
- Your work pace should not cause heavy sweating that will result in wet clothing. Layers of clothing should be removed or added in accordance with your body temperature.

A healthy worker who is properly protected and takes reasonable precautions can function efficiently and safely in cold environments.

### It's the Law!

It is the responsibility of the employer to ensure that the employees are properly attired and supervised when working under extreme cold conditions. Sections 22 and 23(2) of *General Regulation 91-191*, under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* set out the requirements for cold stress.

#### Warning Signs

- severe shivering
- pain in extremities (hands, feet, ears)
- reduced mental capacity

#### Precautions to avoid cold stress

- proper clothing
- frequent measurement of temperature (with wind factor) – see section 22(a)
- taking warm-up breaks in a shelter – section 22(b)
- instruction on signs of hypothermia and frostbite



- 1 Head covering should not reduce your peripheral vision.
- 2 Anti-fog safety glasses or goggles.
- 3 Don't forget your hearing protection!
- 4 Snug fitting mittens or gloves which won't get caught in machinery.
- 5 When possible, choose mittens over gloves as they retain heat better.
- 6 Suspenders allow for better heat circulation than belts.
- 7 Slip-resistant and waterproof insulated boots.

#### Layered clothing:

- 1st layer – snug fitting and allows sweat to escape
- 2nd layer – loose and warm
- 3rd layer – windproof and waterproof