

SAFETY & HEALTH BULLETIN

WORKING IN THE COLD

Working in cold environments is not safe. It can damage your skin (frost bite). It can interfere with working safely. Manual tasks are harder, because cold reduces strength and flexibility. And being cold makes it harder to pay attention.

Your body loses heat in three ways.

- into the air when the air is cooler than your body, or in the wind
- by touching cold and wet surfaces or clothing
- through sweat and breathing in cold weather

Cold is more dangerous if you have health problems. Cold makes it harder to breathe and can lead to an asthma attack. It places a demand on your heart and circulation, so you should be extra careful if you have cardiovascular disease. Diabetes affects circulation in your hands or feet, and makes frostbite more likely.

If you feel dizzy or sleepy, you can't stop shivering or your skin is lightening in spots or is patchy and painful, return immediately to a warm place. Help any coworker who has these symptoms. Provide warm fluids and dry clothes. Get medical treatment. Cold-related health problems should be reported as injuries on duty.

You have a right to a safe and comfortable work environment.

- Heating should be provided whenever possible
- Clothes should suit the temperature and work
- Warm up areas must be available

TWU Local 100: 212-873-6000, ask for your department

For off-hours emergencies, call the TWU Local 100 Safety & Health Hotline 888-302-3727



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Follow cold weather procedures to avoid getting cold or wet or causing ice build-up:

- No wet work to be done in areas below 32° F (Mobile Wash, for example)
- Cleaners and others can take the train to the nearest warm-up areas (terminals or the nearest warm station or booth location) as needed
- Track gangs should start work from locations with warm areas
- Use available heat curtains, and keep all doors and gates closed
- Bus relief and others working outside should have access to warm-up areas

COLD OUTSIDE

- Below 40° F you should wear protective clothing, including a hat and gloves, that keeps you warm and dry. It should not retain moisture if you sweat and must let you work safely.
- You should be able to take breaks in a warm area.
- Don't touch metal surfaces below freezing without gloves.
- Remember that using gloves and wearing heavy clothing can restrict movement and strength. You may not be able to do as much when wearing protective clothing as you usually do.

COLD INSIDE

According to the NYC building codes, rooms in buildings must be kept to a minimum of 70° F. Machinery rooms and repair shops should be 50° F.

- If you cannot work comfortably wearing appropriate work clothing, it is too cold.
- If you feel you cannot operate your train or tools safely, it is too cold.
- If you need to take a warm-up break, let your supervisor know.

WHAT TO DO IF YOUR WORK AREA IS TOO COLD:

- Tell your supervisor if it is too cold in your work area, quarters or other crew facilities.
- Ask for heaters when the heating doesn't work.
- Tell your supervisor if the outdoor temperature and wind combined make it too cold to work safely.
- If the situation is not immediately resolved, tell your chairperson or walk-around rep. If necessary, call your department at the Union Hall.
- You may need to file a Safety Dispute Resolution Form if the problem is not fixed.

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