

Safety – Initiative

01 Winter Working

November 2010

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1. Objective of the initiative

To ensure all employees understand the risks involved in:

- Working in winter weather conditions and implementing effective control measures required to ensure safe working.
- Increase the awareness of road and other dangers associated with winter.

2. Overview.

Accident trends have shown that winter presents its own particular hazards, such hazards include – extreme wind conditions, poor lighting, driving rain, fog, snow, ice and black ice.

Road conditions are likely to worsen, it is important that employees who spend time on the road understand associated hazards such as increased stopping distances, slippery roads and poor visibility.

Environmental implications also need to be considered, such as – heavy rain causing flooding, leading to pollution of groundwater, drip trays overflowing and strong winds causing litter from unsecured waste receptacles.

In very cold conditions thinking, response and reaction times are slower. Body heat loss can cause accidents. Heat loss can be caused through ineffective clothing, being wet and cold or being inactive.

Clothing worn in layers provides better insulation. The majority of heat loss from a body is through the head, hands and feet, therefore wearing a hat under a properly adjusted safety helmet, gloves and thick socks will help maintain body temperature.

All sites should ensure that risk assessments and method statements have been reviewed and include changes in environmental conditions and working methods.

Winter brings adverse weather conditions and darkness during normal working hours which affect visibility, it is essential that clean PPE is worn and correct lighting is applied to the working area.

3. Implementation

All sites are to promote this initiative through a toolbox talk and display on the site health and safety notice board.

4. Planning and Supervision.

When planning and supervising work during the winter months, consider the following:

- Check on imminent weather conditions that could affect the proposed work such as frost, heavy rain, snow or prevailing winds.
- Planning is essential, where weather conditions have the potential to stop work, it must be determined whether work can be stopped safely, if it cannot be stopped safely work should not commence.
- Include the above elements in your risk assessments and method statements, particularly for lifting operations and working over or near to water.
- Ensure the welfare arrangements are sufficient; consider drying room, heating food and water, shelter for persons whom are continually exposed to adverse weather conditions, such as security persons.
- Ensure there are sufficient trained first aid personnel on site and that they can recognize the signs of hyperthermia and frostbite and know how to deal with it.
- Ensure that sufficient PPE is available and that it is suitable for the weather conditions.
- Control measures for hand arm vibration will need to be reviewed as cold conditions effect body temperature and circulation.
- Carry out regular gritting when necessary to ensure pedestrian paths and roads are not slippery
- Complete lighting checks, to ensure there is sufficient lighting for the work being conducted and pedestrians around site. Remember that lighting can also be considered an environmental nuisance.

5. Hazardous Winter Conditions.

High Winds

During high wind speed, lifting operations should be stopped. Where there is potential for high winds during a working period lifting should only commence if operations can be stopped safely.

Restrictions on roof working or any other working at height also need to be considered. All site materials should be secured and sheet scaffolding should be checked to ensure it has sufficient ties. Scaffolding should be inspected after there has been high wind speeds.

Where high wind speeds are coupled with severe temperature drop, wind chill factors should be established. In coastal areas be aware of high tides and gale warnings.

Low Sun

During winter the sun is positioned lower in the sky, this can lead to high levels of glare and reduced visibility. Tinted glasses should be considered for jobs where the low lying

sun cold effect visibility i.e. plant operators, banksmen and drivers.

Frost and Snow

Before work commences all access and egress points and scaffold walk-boards should be cleared of snow and ice. All excavations should be cordoned off during heavy snowfall. Plant operators should check the braking systems once the plant is warmed up. Work on vibratory tools should be reviewed amending exposure limits when required. Site traffic management plans should be reviewed, reducing speed limits where required. Cleaning activities should also be reviewed to prevent areas of ice forming through the application of water.

Heavy Rain

Where rain water has the potential to flow beyond containments E.g. excavations, step up pumping to avoid pollution. Ensure all drip trays and bunds are regularly emptied to prevent overflowing; Plant Nappies should be utilized in preference of bunds as contaminants are contained within the nappy. Inspect scaffolding, excavations and other temporary works after heavy rainfall.

Lighting Levels

Ensure suitable and sufficient lighting is available for all operations including pedestrians, consider pollution and implement controls where necessary. The fire risk should also be considered where using lights that emit heat E.g. halogen.

Driving Conditions

Drivers need to bear in mind that stopping distances are doubled in wet conditions and can be up to ten times longer in icy conditions. Preparation and vehicle checks are vital. Drivers should allow more time for journeys, taking into account regular breaks. Tyre tread, water levels, oil and screen wash levels should all be checked on a regular basis. Drivers of vehicles and plant should not drive or operate until all of the windows are clear of frost and have good visibility.

6. Security

Ensure that the site is left secure over Christmas as this is prime time for theft. Each site should try to implement the following:

- Return hired plant and keep all over equipment secure or out of sight.
- Ensure security lights, alarms and CCTV are operable.
- Secure all cabins and containers
- Immobilize plant and secure all keys.

7. Dos and Don'ts

Do

- Report to your supervisor anyone you believe may be showing signs of exposure or hyperthermia.
- Report adverse conditions E.g. ice patches to your supervisor.
- Use welfare facilities provided to ensure all clothes are dried.
- Take regular breaks and consume hot food and drinks as necessary.
- Ensure all indoor floors are kept dry.
- Be aware of slips, trips and falls in wet and icy conditions.
- Salt and grit where required.
- Review control measures for vibrating equipment.
- Check all plant and vehicles prior to use and warm up before use.
- Ensure PPE is adequate for the weather conditions.
- Remember stopping distances in wet and icy conditions
- Ensure risk assessments and method statements reflect potential weather conditions.
- Ensure all materials are stored correctly and securely.

Don't

- Work at height or carry out lifting operations during high winds.
- Work in areas where lighting is insufficient.
- Attempt to work in extreme weather conditions where there is an unreasonable risk to health and well-being.
- Carry out work where the weather has created additional hazards such as flooded areas or unsafe work surfaces.

