’Tis the Season For Employee Safety During Cold Temperatures

As we maintain our homes and vehicles in preparation for winter temperatures, we need to remember to protect ourselves, too. This is especially true for those who work outdoors amid frigid temperatures, wind and other elements that Mother Nature brings during winter.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), there are five types of cold stress — hypothermia, cold water immersion, frostbite, trench foot and chilblains. For symptoms of these stresses and first-aid techniques, please visit the CDC website by clicking here or by visiting the INDOT intranet “Prevent Cold Stress This Winter” billboard advertisement on the home page.

“Employees are our No. 1 asset,” said Deputy Commissioner of Human Resources Kim Pearson. “We want them to be safe on the job in all weather conditions so they can go home safely each day.”

General tips for protection from winter elements include:

- Recognize the environmental and workplace conditions that lead to potential cold-induced illness and injuries, and communicate these hazards with fellow employees.
- Wear layers of loose-fitting, lightweight, warm clothing. Trapped air between the layers will insulate you. Outer garments should be tightly woven, water repellent and hooded.
- Wear a hat, as 40 percent of your body heat escapes from your head.
- Cover your mouth to protect your lungs from extreme cold.
- Mittens, snug at the wrist, are better than gloves.
- Drink warm, non-caffeine, sweet beverages (sugar water, sports-type drinks) when performing activities that will burn a large amount of calories quickly. Avoid drinks with caffeine (coffee, tea or hot chocolate).
- Try to stay dry and out of the wind.
- Take frequent short breaks in warm, dry shelter areas to allow the body to warm up.
- Use the buddy system (work in pairs) to keep an eye on co-workers.

“We just finished our fourth-quarter training and reviewed protecting employees in cold weather,” said Seymour District Safety and Health Program Director Andy Allen. “It can take anywhere from five to 30 minutes for frostbite to occur, and employees are often in the elements for 30 minutes or more. Indiana winter weather includes a bit of everything, so it’s crucial that employees are prepared.”

Allen distributed wind chill charts for posting at various facilities in the district as part of the training. “A temperature of 10 degrees above zero, combined with a 55 mph wind will cause frostbite,” Allen said. That is why the wind chill factor is important.”

The wind chill chart, provided by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association and the National Weather Service, can be found on INDOT’s SafetyWeb.
Because many employees are required to work outdoors in inclement weather, Pearson reminds employees that INDOT assists them financially with clothing and footwear expenses through the **Protective Clothing Reimbursement Program**.

This program increased employee reimbursement levels effective July 1, 2012. Full-time employees may be reimbursed one time per fiscal year, up to $160; intermittent (seasonal) or part-time employees may be reimbursed one time per fiscal year, up to $80.

**OPERATIONS Training Committee**

For seasonal and seasoned employees, the Operations Training Committee offers several training videos for INDOT employees, including winter operations. Winter operations video offerings include: Anti-Icing/Brine, Pre-Trip Snow and Ice, and Truck Wash for Snow Removal.

“The Operations Training Committee works diligently to provide these videos so that maintenance employees may safely and properly operate various equipment,” said Employee Development Technical Training Specialist Daryl Mickens. “The videos are valuable resources, along with other training that is provided.”

To view videos, [click here](#) or visit the Operations Field Information link or Employee Development link from the INDOT intranet home page.