



BUILDING
CONTROL

COLD WEATHER TIPS



With the change of seasons upon us, the colder and wetter weather conditions bring about a change of working practises on your site, from keeping workers safe and warm to keeping equipment dry.

We all hear the 'weather warnings' and read about 'leaves on the lines' cancelling public transport, but what we do not hear about is the challenges for staff working on construction sites.

From slippery surfaces, mud and heavy surface water to freezing temperatures. All this can present challenges when it comes to keeping your construction site safe. So here are our jhai Approved Inspector Top Tips to keep your staff and site safe this winter.



Clothing – Stay Dry & Warm

This summer has all been about t-shirt and shorts. Now with the change of conditions, it is time to ensure your staff stay warm and dry in the winter months. Cold, bitter winds, heavy rain and snow can be unpleasant to deal with for a short duration. For those who are working all day in these conditions on a construction site proper precautions are needed to protect your health and well-being.

We recommend you layer up with at least one insulating base layer and a waterproof to stay warm and dry. We also encourage staff to bring a change of clothing with them, so with any changes in conditions, they have the clothing to cope. One thing that is often overlooked in the UK is your body's extremities - feet, hands and head. These extremities can get cold quickly if not covered. Therefore, site-suitable hats, gloves and thick socks should be worn by everyone in conjunction with the correct and up to date PPE equipment.



Another good tip!

Steel-capped boots can become freezing in cold conditions, so to avoid freezing toes, use composite-capped safety boots or boots made specifically for working in winter conditions. Obviously make sure they are safety approved!



Don't forget the equipment!

Site equipment and tools can be expensive, in the winter conditions they are subject to damage if exposed to the harsher elements. For example, those expensive electronic toys can freeze over causing fatal damage to internal electrical components, so keep them stored when not in use to help make sure they do not deteriorate throughout winter months.

The best solution is indoor storage, but if this is not possible, then have a look at weatherproof storage lockers or site containers to keep at least the essentials dry.



Warm break areas

Remember the feeling of warming up with a hot drink after being out in the cold?

For site workers this is a very important welcome break in the winter months. Providing a break area that is warm and dry with facilities for hot drinks and food is essential, creating a caring environment for your staff, helping them cope both physically and mentally with the cold. Break areas are also a great place for posters and leaflets that educate the workforce on the symptoms of frostbite and hypothermia (both require immediate medical attention) and encourage staff to look after their own safety, a very important aspect of any modern construction site.



Sloooooooooooooow down!

With HSE stating limits of 10, 15 or 20 mph may be appropriate depending on the vehicles used and site layout and hazards, you might consider bringing this down to 5 mph as freezing weather can cause the temporary roads to become a far more dangerous place. Stock up on grit too. HSE recommends gritting when frost, ice or snow is forecast to reduce the risk of site traffic skidding.

Our top tip here is to grit first thing in the morning, if possible before workers arrive, as remember it does not work instantly. Then grit again as the last job before your site shuts, giving the grit time to melt anything that the overnight weather may throw at you.

Remember, if you grit when it is raining heavily the salt will be washed away causing a problem if the temperature drops turning the rain into snow. It is also worth pointing out that compacted snow which turns to ice can be difficult to treat effectively with grit.



Check, check and check again

Maintenance checks are important throughout the year. Come winter they are even more essential.

With heightened safety risks posed by the winter seasons, taking steps to ensure work platforms, surfaces, roads and machinery are suitable for use is of supreme importance.

It is also worth looking beyond the site itself. Routinely check the weather forecasts and plan ahead for a smoother operation as, for example, laying block or concrete in cold weather has its own challenges. Visit www.jhai.co.uk/blog/laying-blocks-or-placing-concrete-in-cold-weather for more on this subject.