

During the winter months, operators of suspended scaffolding platforms are exposed to more hazards than normal. All of the normal hazards exist such as risk of falls, trips, slips and falling objects, but exposure to the elements can be the greatest risk at this time of the year.

Exposure to adverse weather conditions can be greatly underestimated. There are OSHA regulations concerning extreme wind conditions but not how much cold operators should be exposed to. During the cold weather months when people have to do their jobs outside some safety precautions are overlooked.

When it is cold outside you normally put a jacket on. If it is really cold outside, you put on a jacket, two shirts and a set of long underwear. Have you considered how easy it is to do your job with 5 layers of clothing?

Bundling up during cold weather may help to prevent most of the cold from getting to you, but it can set you up for other hazards. You may have to resize your safety harness. If you have 5 layers of clothing on, your ability to move is more restricted. This could prevent you moving clear of falling objects if need be. Since the clothing is more restrictive, it may fatigue you sooner than normal. You may want to consider, if you must be exposed to cold weather, limiting the length of the work day. Consider also working split shifts that allow for rest between work sessions.

During periods of work in very cold weather it is even more important that you work with a partner. If you become incapacitated due to cold weather exposure, your partner could get help.

Be aware of the warning signs of cold weather exposure that can lead to hypothermia.

- Tiredness: reluctance to keep moving.
- Slurred speech
- Disturbed vision
- Collapse

What to do for Hypothermia

1. Prevent further heat loss (get to a warmer area, if needed change into dry clothes and bundle up in warmer clothes)
2. If the victim is conscious, give a warm drink (No coffee or tea and NEVER ALCOHOL)
3. Get help and assist the professionals as directed by them.

Did You Know?

- Unless the temperature drops below -20° F, the normal operation of Power Climber hoists remains unaffected.
- The SIA handbook that is presented to all successful students in the Safety Program for Suspended Scaffolds contains a reprint of the wind chill index and is available through the SIA at www.scaffold.org.
- As general rule the temperature drops one degree for every 100' of vertical travel from the ground.
- Ice buildup on a platform is not only slippery, but could also add significant weight to platform if not removed.

Tips and Tricks

- Put a couple pieces of chalk in your toolbox to absorb moisture and keep the rust down on tools.

For questions or comments, contact Customer Service at 1-800-560-CLIMB (2546) or customerservice@safeworks.com.