

# New York State Public Entities Safety Group 497

## Safety Agenda

\_\_\_ Chief, Fire Department  
\_\_\_ Site Administrators  
\_\_\_ Commissioners  
\_\_\_ Human Resources  
\_\_\_ Supt. Bldgs/Grounds  
\_\_\_ Elected Officials

Volume 13, Issue 6

December 2006/January 2007

Published by NYS Public Entities Safety Group 497 – Dedicated to improving workplace safety

### Cold Weather Tips

Winter weather can bring on serious health problems, especially if we are negligent in taking steps to stay healthy. *Some tips for working in the cold:*

- \* Before exiting your nice warm home or workplace, take stock of the conditions outside as well as the weather report for the day.
- \* Wear proper clothing for cold, wet and windy conditions, including layers that can be adjusted to changing conditions. A warm hat, sleeves that are snug at the wrist, and water-resistant coat and boots are advisable. Be sure the outer layer of your clothing is tightly woven, preferably wind-resistant to reduce body-heat loss.
- \* At the first signs of redness or pain in any skin area, get out of the cold or protect any exposed skin. Signs of frostbite are a white or grayish-yellow skin area, skin that feels unusually firm or waxy, and numbness
- \* When working in extreme weather conditions or conducting repetitive activities such as snow plowing, take frequent short breaks in warm dry shelters to allow your body to warm up.
- \* Stay dry - wet clothing chills the body. Do not ignore shivering.
- \* Avoid exhaustion or fatigue - you need your energy just to keep warm.
- \* Eat warm, high-calorie foods such as hot pasta dishes.
- \* Work with a buddy whenever possible and be sensitive to your buddy's danger signs.
- \* Drink warm, sweet beverages (sugar water, sports-type drinks) and avoid drinks with caffeine (coffee, tea, sodas or hot chocolate) or alcohol.
- \* Be aware that you face increased risks when you are taking certain medications; if you are in poor physical condition; or if you suffer from illnesses such as diabetes, hypertension or cardiovascular disease.
- \* Understand Wind Chill. The Wind Chill Index is the temperature your body feels when the air temperature is combined with the wind speed. It is based on the heat loss from exposed skin caused by the effects of wind and cold. As the speed of the wind increases, it can carry heat away from your body much more quickly, causing skin temperature to drop. When there are high winds, serious weather-related health problems are more likely, *even when temperatures are only cool. For example, the actual air temperature may be 30 degrees, but if there is a wind of 30 mph, it has the same effect as if the temperature is 15 degrees.*
- \* Recognize the dangers of hypothermia. Your body begins to lose heat faster than it can be produced when you are exposed to cold temperatures. The result is abnormally low body temperature, which affects the brain, making you unable to think clearly or move well. Hypothermia is most likely at very cold temperatures, but it can occur even at cool temperatures (above 40 degrees F) if you become chilled from rain, sweat, or submersion in cold water. Warning signs are shivering, exhaustion, confusion, trembling hands, memory loss, slurred speech, and drowsiness.

## Ladder Safety

Falls from ladders injure more than 20,000 American workers every year, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. There are many potential causes of falls from ladders - losing footing while carrying tools or materials up the ladder, grease, ice, mud, snow or water on the rungs, and old and poorly maintained ladders that break during use.

*The most common ladder accident results from the ladder base slipping out of position. This happens when the ladder is at a wrong angle, the worker climbs too fast, or the surface below the ladder is wet, bumpy or uneven.*

**Set Up the Proper Ladder Angle:** The American National Standards Institute recommends setting ladders at a 75.5 degree angle. You can check your angle by:

- Using the label with the large “L” on the side of the ladder as a guide. The long leg of the “L” should be parallel to the wall or the short leg parallel to the floor, or
- Setting the base of the ladder one-quarter of the working length from the wall, or
- Positioning the ladder so that the heel of your palm comfortably reaches the side rails. Stand with your toes at the base of the ladder and hold your arms straight out.

### Select the Right Ladder for the Job:

- Never use wood or metal ladders for electrical work
- Don’t use a step ladder where a straight ladder is needed and vice versa
- Check ladder capacity and strength
- Read and follow all manufacturer’s instructions

### Inspect the Ladder: Look for

- Loose or missing rungs or cleats
- Loose nails, bolts or screws
- Cracked, broken, split, dented, or badly worn rungs, cleats, or side rails
- Wood splinters

- Corrosion of metal ladders or metal parts
- Worn or frayed extension ladder ropes and pulleys
- Wet or slippery rungs

### Set Up the Ladder Properly:

- Be sure straight ladders are long enough so that the side rails extend above the top support point by at least 3 feet. Tie it off, top and bottom. Have someone “foot” the bottom while tying off the top
- Get help to move or set up heavy and awkward ladders
- Erect the ladder on a solid, level surface.
- Secure the base when raising an extension ladder and never set up when extended
- Don’t set up ladders in areas such as doorways or walkways where they may be run into by others, unless they are protected by barriers. Keep the area around the top and base of the ladder clear. Don’t run hoses, extension cords, or ropes on a ladder and create an obstruction.
- Check the ladder angle
- Fully open step ladders and lock the spreader. Make sure that the feet contact a level supporting structure.

### Use Safe Climbing Techniques:

- To avoid slipping, check your shoes for oil, grease, or mud and wipe if off
- Don’t rush
- Face the ladder and use both hands while climbing up or down
- Keep at least both feet and one hand or both hands and one foot on the ladder at all times
- Carry tools in pockets or belt or hoist them on a rope
- Keep your eyes on the ladder and pay attention to your hand and foot placement
- Stay off the top two rungs or steps of all ladders.

HAPPY NEW YEAR!