



## NEWS RELEASE

**For Immediate Release**

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**Media Contact:** Mary Tucker, Manager of Communications  
WorkSafeNB  
Telephone: 506 632-2828 or 1 800 222-9775

### **WORKSAFE NB OFFERS HOT TIPS FOR WORKING IN THE COLD**

**Saint John, NB:** With temperatures across the province falling well below the monthly average, WorkSafeNB reminds employers and workers of the serious health hazards posed by working in the cold. Under General Regulation 91-191 of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, employers are required to ensure their employees are properly attired and supervised when working under extreme cold conditions.

“Many workers who must brave the elements, such as construction workers, mail carriers, police officers and firefighters, maintenance and recreation workers, are exposed to the risk of injuries such as chilblains, trenchfoot, frostbite, hypothermia, and even death,” said Dave Greason, WorkSafeNB’s vice-president of WorkSafe Services. “It’s important to keep in mind that workers with health conditions (cardiovascular disease, diabetes, hypertension and those on certain medications) face even higher risk, and some indoor workers, such as those working in refrigerated warehouses, for example, are also at risk. But by following safe behaviours and providing and using the proper safety equipment and clothing, these injuries can be avoided,” Greason said.

Wearing the appropriate clothing is the first line of protection in combatting the cold. WorkSafeNB recommends that workers dress in at least three layers. The first layer should be snug fitting and made of a material, such as silk or polypropylene that wicks moisture away from the skin. The middle layer should be loose and of a warm material, such as wool or down, and the third, or outer layer, should be wind and waterproof (nylon or Gore-Tex, for example).

Since significant body heat can be lost through the head, a warm knit hat, or a liner under a hard hat, is imperative. Since mittens retain heat better, they should be worn for any work below -17°, he said, and for work not requiring fine manual dexterity, gloves can be used below 4°C for light work, and -7°C for moderate work. Footwear should be insulated, slip-resistant and waterproof.

Safety in the cold also means practising safe behaviours. Employers should schedule work during the warmest hours of the day, monitor the temperature closely, and ensure that employees work at a comfortable pace, take frequent breaks in warm dry shelters, and drink warm, sweet beverages (sports-type drinks) to prevent dehydration. Avoid caffeinated drinks.

Recognizing the signs of frostbite and hypothermia can help prevent amputation or death. That is why WorkSafeNB encourages the buddy system, Greason said. Danger signs include uncontrolled shivering, slurred speech, clumsy movements, fatigue and confused behaviour. If you notice these signs, call for emergency help. If help is not immediately available, remove any wet clothing and dry the worker. Warm them gradually by wrapping them in blankets, or putting on dry clothing and moving them to a warmer place.

For more information on working in the cold, or for a copy of WorkSafeNB's *Surviving the Cold* Risk Alert, call 1 800 222-9775, or visit our website at [www.worksafenb.ca](http://www.worksafenb.ca). Sections 22 and 23(2) of General Regulation 91-191 set out the requirements for cold stress.

#### **ABOUT WORKSAFENB**

WorkSafeNB administers no-fault workplace accident and disability insurance for employers and their workers, funded solely through employer assessments. WorkSafeNB is committed to preventing workplace injuries and illness through education and the enforcement of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*.