

# Contractor Strategies for Winter Building Projects

Cold temperatures and snowy conditions require specific strategies to retain efficiency, keep workers safe, and protect your job site and equipment.



## Jobsite factors

- Before freezing conditions set in, make sure all construction site access roads are free of pot holes and uneven surfaces. Once the ground is frozen, road maintenance becomes more difficult.
- Be cognizant of the fact that inclines that seem perfectly manageable for your equipment in warm weather may become a slipping hazard in cold weather. Plan accordingly. Keep reserves of sand and salt on hand.
- Have appropriate snow removal equipment onsite. Shoveling snow can be very strenuous. Cold temperatures can constrict arteries putting people at a high risk of heart attacks. Make sure plowing is done by experienced plow truck operators. Plow snow away from the building project to avoid flooding during a thaw.
- Make sure engine fluids and hydraulic oils in your equipment are rated for cold weather. Replace them if necessary.
- Drain fluid from air compressor tanks after each use. Put antifreeze tool oil in your pneumatic tools and air hoses.
- Check that in-cab heaters are working. Regularly clear snow and ice from windshields and steps of vehicles and equipment.
- Shield workers from dangerous wind chills whenever possible.
- Avoid using gas powered heaters in enclosed areas to eliminate the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning.



## Worker safety and personal protection equipment

- Ice can quickly accumulate on scaffolding, ladders, and work platforms. Be sure these areas are monitored and de-iced as required.
- Keep all walkways free of ice and snow to prevent slip and fall injuries.
- Avoid working on roofs whenever possible during icy conditions.
- Have workers dress in layers: a base layer, a thermal layer, and a wind/moisture resistant layer.
- In extreme temperatures, provide a warming area for breaks so workers can have a reprieve from the cold.
- Adjust all fall arrest systems to fit over bulkier clothing

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- PPE specific to colder temperatures can include:
  - o Hats and facemasks that fit under hard hats and also protect ears and neck
  - o Insulated, waterproof, and slip-resistant boots
  - o Wool, moisture-wicking socks
  - o Glare-resistant eye protection
  - o Warm, durable, waterproof gloves with the right fabric to allow for dexterity



## Protect your project

- Have long handled snow rakes to remove the snowload from the structure.
- Consider temporary site structures or site covers to enclose and protect your project and protect your equipment.
- Sleet, ice, freezing, and thawing contribute to foundation cracks. Keep snow and watershed away from all foundations.
- Don't pour concrete in temperatures below 40 degrees. If there's been a frost, remove all frost by heating the area if necessary. Allow all moisture to dissipate.
- Budget for weather delays. There will most likely be weather delays. Be prepared for it.

