U.S. Department of Labor
MSHA
Mine Safety & Health Administration

Safety Alert

Winter Safety in Mining

Winter brings a sharp rise in slips, trips, falls, vehicle accidents, and cold-stress injuries at surface and underground mines. Snow, ice, and freeze-thaw cycles weaken roads, highwalls, benches, and walkways. Dry winter air can weaken underground roof strata, while prolonged cold exposes miners to hypothermia and frostbite. Most winter injuries are preventable through pre-season equipment inspection, aggressive snow and ice control, proper cold-weather gear, adequate examinations and ground control, and training miners to recognize cold-stress symptoms in themselves and coworkers.

Best Practices

- **Inspect and Winterize Equipment.** Check batteries, fuel lines, brakes, cab heaters, and defrosters, and examine equipment for exhaust leaks before cold weather arrives.
- **Clear Snow and Ice.** Keep roads, walkways, ramps, and work areas clear; apply salt and sand where needed, and keep windshields, mirrors, and lights free of snow and ice.
- **Drive Cautiously.** Reduce speeds, maintain safe following distances, always wear seat belts, and watch for black ice on haul roads.
- **Slow Down in Whiteout Conditions.** Heavy snow can hide berms, drop-offs, damaged roads, and other vehicles; reduce speed, turn on headlights and beacons, maintain radio contact, and stop if you cannot see the road ahead.
- **Examine Ground Conditions.** Check the integrity of highwalls, benches, and roadways after each rain, freeze, or thaw; underground, monitor changing roof conditions and ventilation.
- **Protect Against Cold Stress.** Wear insulated, layered, waterproof clothing; provide warm shelters and hot liquids; schedule cold jobs for the warmest part of the day; and train miners to recognize hypothermia and frostbite.

Report accidents and hazardous conditions: 1-800-746-1553
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