

# Hazards Affecting Outdoor Workers

As an outdoor worker, you face a number of hazards in your work environment. It is important for you to assess the hazards in your workplace and find out what you and your employer can do to reduce injuries.

What You Should Know About	What Can Your Employer Do?	What Can You Do?
<p><b>Cold</b></p> <p>Cold temperatures and high winds cause a quick drop in your body temperature. When it is damp and wet, your body cools even more quickly. Exposure to cold can result in reduced speed and accuracy, shivering, blisters, frostbite, gangrene, and <b>hypothermia</b> (dangerously low body temperature).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ensure on-site heat , such as air jets or heaters</li> <li>• shield work area from wind</li> <li>• provide heated shelter for workers exposed to long periods of cold</li> <li>• use thermal insulating material on equipment handles</li> <li>• establish a buddy system for working outdoors</li> <li>• allow slower work to prevent sweating</li> <li>• ensure someone is trained in first aid and educate all workers in the prevention and symptoms of hypothermia</li> <li>• provide protective gloves and outerwear</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• wear protective gear provided</li> <li>• wear warm dry clothing</li> <li>• take frequent rest breaks in a warm area</li> <li>• try to limit work outside to sunny times of the day to increase warmth</li> <li>• drink <b>nonalcoholic</b> fluids often</li> <li>• know the symptoms of cold-related problems: drowsiness, shivering, numb and/or white skin</li> <li>• know first aid for hypothermia: handle victim carefully, call 911, remove wet cloths and add dry ones, cover with blankets. If medical treatment is delayed, crawl in a pre-warmed sleeping bag with the victim or put insulated hot water bottles in groin &amp; armpits, on the chest and back of neck</li> </ul>
<p><b>Bugs and Bites</b></p> <p><b>Lyme Disease</b> is caused by a bacteria in the gut of certain ticks. When these ticks attach to your body they can transmit bacteria to you. Ticks are found in late spring/early summer in overgrown grassy and wooded areas. Symptoms are: “bulls-eye” rash around the bite, mild fever, stiff neck, joint/ muscle aches, tiredness, headaches and lymph node swelling (lumps on the side of the neck or in armpits).</p> <p><b>West Nile Virus</b> is spread by mosquitoes that have bitten infected birds. Illness from West Nile is rare but occasionally, fever, headaches, body aches and pains and a rash on the chest &amp; stomach may occur. Symptoms of severe infection include: high fever, tremor, convulsions, and paralysis</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• provide uniforms that suit the season</li> <li>• provide insect repellant such as Deet for those working in wooded areas</li> <li>• get rid of standing water to reduce mosquito breeding areas</li> <li>• keep grass around work areas cut</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• wear light coloured clothing, long sleeves, long pants, and a hat</li> <li>• wear insect repellant that contains Deet on <b>exposed</b> skin only (not the face) and on the <b>outside</b> of your clothes.</li> <li>• shower and check your body for ticks daily. Remove ticks immediately with <b>tweezers</b>.</li> <li>• wash clothes in <b>hot</b> water</li> <li>• if you have symptoms of West Nile or Lyme Disease, see your doctor</li> </ul>
<p><b>Sun</b></p> <p>When the sun shines directly or through clouds, it can damage your eyes and skin even if it is not hot outside.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• provide safety glasses with side shields and ultraviolet (UV) protection</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• wear glasses with UV protection especially if looking up into the sun</li> <li>• wear sunscreen with a sun protective factor (SPF) of 15 or more</li> <li>• wear a wide brimmed hat</li> </ul>

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<p><b>Eye Injuries</b></p> <p>Flying pieces of rock or metal, nails, chemicals, and radiation can cause eye injuries and blindness. Eye infections and burns can be caused from wood, chemicals, and plants. Compressed air, especially when used for cleaning, has caused many serious eye injuries</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● provide shields and guards such as windshields on equipment</li> <li>● provide safety glasses with side shields and UV protection</li> <li>● prohibit the use of compressed air for cleaning</li> <li>● ensure there is an eye wash station nearby</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● wear protective gear provided</li> <li>● learn First Aid for eye injuries and how to use eye wash stations</li> </ul>
<p><b>Road and Equipment Safety</b></p> <p>City and highway workers are at risk of injury from traffic. Poorly maintained equipment is a hazard to all workers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● establish traffic control procedures and post signs alerting drivers of road work and reduced speed limit</li> <li>● maintain all equipment, pad vibrating tools and provide safety equipment (e.g., harnesses for those working at high levels, automatic shut-off valves, and grounded electrical outlets)</li> <li>● provide training on all equipment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● wear proper footwear when using any powered machine</li> <li>● wear <b>all</b> safety equipment provided and learn how to use it</li> <li>● ensure there is enough room to get on and off equipment when working on roads or bridges</li> </ul>
<p><b>Skin and Respiratory Hazards</b></p> <p>Animals, wood, moulds, and earth can cause fungal and bacterial skin injuries. Chemicals from plants, insecticides, paint, and cleaners can cause skin burns and dermatitis. You can get cuts, blisters, and bone damage from mechanical pressure and vibration especially if equipment is not well maintained. If you breath in dust, fumes, and chemicals you may experience throat irritation, coughing or nausea. Breathing in chemicals can also cause bronchitis, lung damage, poisoning, and cancer.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● use only the safest chemicals</li> <li>● provide protective gloves and clothing</li> <li>● provide equipment for hand washing</li> <li>● use ventilated cabs that purify air <b>before</b> it enters the cab</li> <li>● provide properly selected respirators as necessary</li> <li>● maintain all equipment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● wear all protective gear provided</li> <li>● learn the proper use of respirators</li> <li>● wash your hands before eating or touching your mouth or eyes</li> </ul>

Please see our fact sheets on other hazards such as workplace chemicals, vibration, heat, and noise or information regarding backs, repetitive strain injuries, and respirator selection.

For more information contact:

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