TOOLBOX TALK AWARENESS PACKAGES

HAZ-CLD · Cold Stress and Cold Rooms Awareness

Product Overview

Audience: Workers and supervisors who work in freezers and cold rooms, or outdoors in cold, wet or windy weather · Duration: 20–30 minutes

Version 1.0 · 22 November 2026

For anyone who works in freezers and cold rooms, or outdoors in cold, wet and windy weather: hypothermia, frostbite and other cold injuries, the risks of cold rooms from being locked in to forklifts and leaks, and the controls that keep people warm and safe.

Cold stress happens when the body loses heat faster than it can make it: in freezers and cold rooms, outdoors in cold, wet and windy weather, and near cold water. It can cause hypothermia, frostbite, chilblains and trench foot, and long before that it numbs hands and slows thinking, so people drop things, slip and make mistakes. Cold rooms add being shut in, icy floors, heavy lifting in bulky clothing, forklifts and refrigerant or ammonia leaks.

This talk covers how cold stress happens, the signs of hypothermia and cold injuries, the risks of cold rooms and freezers, and the controls: time limits, warm-up breaks, layered clothing and insulated PPE, keeping dry, door releases and alarms that are checked, buddy and check-in systems, and first aid for hypothermia in general terms. It is awareness, not first aid training or training for work in cold water.

Learning outcomes

By the end of the session participants will be able to:

- Explain how cold stress happens, and why wet, wind and long periods in the cold make it worse
- Recognise the signs of hypothermia, frostbite, chilblains and trench foot, and how the cold numbs hands and slows thinking
- Know the risks of cold rooms and freezers: being locked in, icy floors, manual handling, forklifts and refrigerant or ammonia leaks
- Check the inside door release and alarm, and use the buddy and check-in system, before working in a cold room or freezer
- Use the controls: time limits, warm-up breaks, layered clothing and insulated PPE, keeping dry, warm drinks and getting used to the cold
- Respond to someone with hypothermia: get them somewhere warm and dry, warm them gently, call the emergency number if it is serious, and report it

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What it covers

Module	Covers
Why it matters	How cold stress happens; Hypothermia and cold injuries; Numb hands and slow thinking
Controls that work	Time limits and warm-up breaks; Clothing, PPE and keeping dry; Cold room doors, alarms and check-ins
Your part	Check before you go in; Look out for each other; Respond and report

Activities

- Cold room check: workers walk through the checks before a shift in a freezer, from the inside door release and alarm to the floor, the PPE and the check-in time
- What would you do: workers decide what to do in four cold situations, from a workmate who is shivering and confused to a freezer door that will not open from inside

What is in the package

Item	File
Editable PowerPoint presentation with speaker notes, plus PDF	02_TRAINING_PRESENTATION/Training Presentation.pptx and .pdf
Facilitator guide with a running sheet, discussion prompts and model answers	03_FACILITATOR_GUIDE/Facilitator Guide.docx and .pdf
Participant handout with the key points to take away	04_PARTICIPANT_HANDOUT/Participant Handout.docx and .pdf
Attendance record form, to capture who attended, when, and who facilitated	06_RECORDS/Attendance Record.docx and .pdf
Excel attendance register	06_RECORDS/Attendance Register.xlsx
Multiple-choice theory assessment, to record understanding if your business wants to	05_ASSESSMENT/Theory Assessment.docx and .pdf
Answer key for the assessment	05_ASSESSMENT/Assessment Answer Key.docx and .pdf
Certificate template	06_RECORDS/Certificate Template.docx
Start here: Read Me First, Product Overview, Permitted Use Terms, Version Information	01_START_HERE/ (four PDFs)

What you need to deliver it

- A facilitator such as a supervisor, leading hand or WHS adviser who has read the facilitator guide and knows your site's arrangements for the topic
- A screen or projector, or printed slides or handouts: it works in a crib room, site office or on a video call
- Your own site procedures for the topic, to point to during the session

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Questions

Does it give temperature limits or work and warm-up times? No, on purpose. Safe times depend on the temperature, wind, wet, the work and the clothing, and guidance differs between countries. Add your own time limits and warm-up breaks from your risk assessment and your regulator's or industry's guidance.

Can we add our own site procedures and photos? Yes. The slides, handout and guide are editable, and the facilitator guide marks the places to add your own procedures, contacts and photos of your workplace.

Do we have to use the assessment? No. It is there if your business wants a record that each worker understood the key points. The attendance record on its own shows who attended and when.

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TOOLBOX TALK

Cold Stress and Cold Rooms Awareness

Freezers, cold rooms and cold weather: staying warm, alert and safe

20–30 minutes · Workers and supervisors who work in freezers and cold rooms, or outdoors in cold, wet or windy weather

[Company name] · [Date] · [Facilitator name]

CLD

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What this talk is, and is not

This talk covers

- ✓ How cold stress happens
- ✓ Hypothermia and cold injuries
- ✓ Cold room and freezer risks
- ✓ Controls and what to do

This talk is not

- ✕ First aid training
- ✕ Cold water work or rescue
- ✕ Forklift or refrigeration training
- ✕ Our procedure: **[Our cold room procedure]**

Awareness only. First aid, cold water work, forklifts and refrigeration plant need their own training and, for some, a licence.

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How cold stress happens

The body loses heat faster than it can make it.

- Freezers and cold rooms, hour after hour
- Outdoors in cold, wet and windy weather
- Wet clothing, sweat and wind strip heat away
- Cold water takes heat far faster than air
- Tired, hungry or unwell: higher risk

A composite example

- A picker spends three hours in the freezer to finish an order, skipping the warm-up break.
- Her hands are numb and she fumbles a carton. It falls on her foot, and she is shivering hard and slow to answer.

Cold hurts before it injures: numb hands and slow thinking.

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Duties under health and safety laws

The business must

- Manage the risk of working in the cold
- Make cold rooms safe to work in and get out of
- Provide warm-up areas, breaks and PPE
- Train and supervise workers

You must

- Follow the time limits and take the breaks
- Wear the clothing and PPE provided
- Check the door release and check in
- Report cold injuries, faults and near misses

Most health and safety laws give these duties. Check the law where you work (in Australia, WHS or OHS laws).

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The order of controls for the cold

1 **Elimination** Pick and stage outside the freezer; move work out of the cold

2 **Substitution** Automated or remote handling; work moved to milder times

3 **Isolation** Heated cabs and warm-up rooms; wind shelters outdoors

4 **Engineering** Inside door releases, alarms, lighting, anti-slip floors, de-icing

5 **Administrative** Time limits, warm-up breaks, buddies and check-ins, training

6 **PPE** Layered clothing, insulated gloves, boots and headwear

HIGHER ORDER

Higher order controls remove or control the hazard at the source, or put a barrier between people and the hazard.

LOWER ORDER

Lower order controls rely on people to do a thing or wear a thing, every time, tired, distracted or rushed.

Behaviours are not on the hierarchy, but behaviours and culture decide whether every control on it actually works.

A door release checked every shift is a control. 'Don't let it shut' is not.

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Cold Stress and Cold Rooms Awareness

Participant handout · keep this

The cold numbs hands and slows thinking before it injures. Keep this page.

The order of controls

1. Less time in the cold: work outside it
2. Automated handling; milder times
3. Heated cabs, warm-up rooms, shelters
4. Door releases, alarms, anti-slip floors
5. Time limits, breaks, buddies, check-ins
6. Layered clothing and insulated PPE

Hypothermia signs

- Shivering, clumsy, slurred, slow
- Confused, drowsy, shivering stops: serious

Never

- Wedge or block a door release
- Skip the warm-up break

Before you go in

- ☐ Does the inside door release work, and is the alarm working?
- ☐ Does someone know I am going in, and when I will check in?
- ☐ Am I wearing dry layers, gloves, a hat and the right boots?
- ☐ Is the floor clear of ice, spills and clutter?
- ☐ Do I know my time limit and when my warm-up break is?

Too cold

- Warm and dry, wet clothing off, warm gently
- Confused, drowsy or collapsed: call your local emergency number (000 in Australia)

Our arrangements

- **[Door release and alarm checks]**
- **[Time limits and breaks]; [Who to report to here]**

Dress for the cold, take your warm-up breaks, and never get locked in.

This is awareness training. It is not a licence, a ticket, a permit or a competency. It is not first aid, cold water or forklift training.

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