



Costain 'Back to Basics' initiative

January 2008

Topic	'Winter Working and Return to Work'
Aim	To remind all staff of the issues associated with winter working and the return to work following the Christmas shut-down
Objective	<p>Ensure that all operational staff appreciate the risks involved in:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Operating in typical winter weather conditions and to be able to identify the control measures required to ensure safe working. 2. Returning to work following the festive season shut-down and the potential issues that need consideration as work begins in the new year.
Overview Action plan and implementation	<p>Experience and statistics have shown that the winter months present their own particular hazards that result in identifiable accident trends. Such hazards include extreme windy conditions, the personal impact of cold temperatures, ice that may (or may not) be obvious, snow, driving rain, saturated ground, fog, poor lighting and so on.</p> <p>Environmental implications may include flooding and associated pollution into the ground or watercourses through heavy rain and dewatering, forgetting to consider the wildlife that may be hibernating during the period, lack of waste security resulting in litter being blown around the site and the production of light pollution from enhanced task lighting.</p> <p>In addition, the Christmas shut down may result in some employees consuming more than average amounts of alcohol. It is therefore important that when returning to work in the new year, staff are reminded of the dangers associated with being under the influence of alcohol whilst working on a construction site. Those arriving / reporting to site or those operating at work who are under the influence (or are suspected as such) will be dealt with accordingly and in-line with Costain Group and site policy. Random testing may also take place depending upon the project – if appropriate, this also needs to be brought to the forefront of operatives minds when returning to work.</p> <p>All sites are to promote this initiative and its associated guidance throughout the month by reviewing the subject:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During daily Start of Shift Briefings and Tool Box Talks • In relevant 'WASP' and Stop Shift briefings • As required when considered by the project team to be at an ideal time <p>The following guidance and associated notes have been designed to act as 'prompts' for the roll-out of the initiative. Implementation will be checked during the monthly SHE Scored Inspection and other monitoring systems.</p>
List of associated tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidance note for this months initiative • Safety Alerts 12, 29 (47 and 62) • SHE Procedures and Guidance Manual (see section 4: Do Work – "Health and Wellbeing", Ecology and Pumping and Dewatering) • INDG240 – Don't mix it! A guide for employers on alcohol at work • Drink driving posters - http://www.thinkroadsafety.gov.uk/catalogue/drinkdriving.htm



COSTAIN

Guidance and associated notes

(Suitable for use with Daily 'Start of Shift' Briefings)

The following points should be considered when planning and supervising your winter time working;

- Make sure all supervisory staff are briefed on the implications of winter working and that it is considered in the planning stage.
- Ensure that you are aware of / make checks on long range or imminent weather conditions such as heavy frost, snow or rainfall, high or prevailing winds and severe temperature drop that could affect works. This is especially necessary where work at height or use of tower cranes is to be undertaken.
- Consider these natural elements in your risk assessments particularly in open field conditions, lifting operations, coastal work, confined spaces work over or adjacent to water.
- Review your welfare arrangements for drying clothes, heating food and water, shelter for operatives employed as gate/security persons.
- Review plant inspection and maintenance schemes (some have winter checks similar to cars)
- Ensure that any chemicals or substances you may be employing are stored and used in temperatures or conditions recommended by the manufacturer.
- Ensure arrangements, consents if required and systems are in place should dewatering be required.
- Do ensure that operatives receive a toolbox talk on cold weather working and information on severe weather conditions
- Have sufficient trained first aiders on site who would recognise the symptoms of hypothermia and frostbite and know how to react to it.
- Remember that blood circulation and body temperature is affected by cold conditions – this will impact on control measures for hazards such as vibration.
- Make sure your stocks of personal protective equipment are sufficient to address the numbers on site and the known or anticipated conditions of work.
- Ensure that PPE is sufficient for the conditions and not adversely affected by the introduction of additional clothing, e.g. hard hats and balaclavas.
- Carry out a detailed lighting check on your site inspections for general lighting and task lighting, particularly at the start and end of shifts. Don't forget that lighting can be viewed as a nuisance in certain areas, especially where it is non-directed and 'spills' into people's properties!

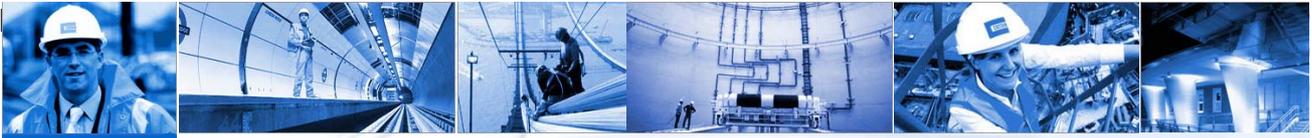
Severe cold can result in a number of effects on the human body. In very cold conditions, peoples thinking, response and reaction times are slower. Both minor and severe accidents can be caused by the body's temperature loss. Temperature loss might not only result from an obvious drop in temperature but through a combination of being wet and exposed to cold winds and physical inactivity. Some peoples eating habits and metabolism can render them more susceptible to such conditions.

Layers of clothing must not fit too tightly to ensure that the warm air produced by the body circulates. Outer garments should be wind resistant. Clothing should not impede a person's mobility. 17% of body heat escapes through the head - a thin woollen hat underneath a safety helmet (properly adjusted) assists in severe conditions.

Meteorological Hazard considerations

Heavy Rain Fall

Inspect excavations, scaffolding and other temporary works after heavy rain. In flood plains or near rivers liaise, with Environment Agency and Meteorological office for local and upriver volumes. Empty drip trays and diesel bunds regularly to prevent overflowing particularly near water courses. Traffic management schemes will require more frequent cleaning. Check to see if rain water is or has the potential to flow beyond containment (inc. excavations) and step-up pumping as necessary. For all pumping and dewatering ensure that required consents and settlement systems are in place.



COSTAIN

Guidance and associated notes

(Suitable for use with Daily 'Start of Shift' Briefings)

Low Lying Winter Sun

Winter sun can be very bright and can lead to reduced visibility and high levels of glare for plant operators, banksmen and drivers of vehicles. Consider this fact in the planning of operations and the issue of tinted glasses.

Heavy Frost and Snow

Ensure scaffold walkway boards, 'Youngmans' and all other access and egress points are cleared of frost, ice and / or snow before work commences. Pay particular attention to plywood steps and landings to temporary offices. Ensure excavations (regardless of depth) are cordoned off in heavy snow. Plant operators must warm up plant and check breaking systems (particularly air breaks), visibility and all other mandatory checks prior to operating. In buildings under construction monitor internal temperatures and consider the provision of space heaters, remembering the issues associated with fire risk. Review work on vibratory hand tools as vibration white finger is accelerated by cold conditions. Reduce site speed limits if necessary.

Lighting levels

Review lighting levels to ensure that suitable and sufficient lighting will be available at all times during operations and that, when selecting suitable lighting, stakeholder light pollution is considered with adequate controls employed as necessary. Also consider any fire risk that may exist through the use of some lighting such as those with a halogen light source, which can pose a fire risk.

High Winds

Cease lifting operations and the use of Mobile Elevated Work Platforms and consider tower crane shut down where high wind speeds are established. Restrictions must be placed on roof working. In known wind prevailing locations, obtain a wind map and install an anemometer. In coastal areas be aware of overtopping, high tides or gale warnings. Tie down "windsail" materials. Ensure sheeted scaffolding has sufficient ties and is inspected after severe conditions. In cases coupled with severe drop in temperature, establish wind chill factors.

Christmas Shut Down

Employees must be reminded of the dangers of being under the influence of alcohol when at work. Drink sensibly and remember alcohol can still be in your system the day after the night before. This should be strongly considered when driving to work and if there is a risk don't drive - a number of police authorities are warning motorists to expect breath testing 24 hours a day in a crack down on drunk driving.

Even a small amount of alcohol can cause a lack of co-ordination and slow reaction times, and also impair judgment, thereby increasing the risk of an accident. Alcohol and substance misuse are linked to many problems at work including:

- accidents at work
- low productivity, poor work performance, erratic timekeeping, and
- difficult employee relations.

Those in safety critical posts and on 24 hour call must remember their associated responsibilities.

Many accidents occur as a result of a lapse in concentration, please be aware of this when returning to work, make the most of the shut down and when you return to work make sure you are focused on the job!

Also remember that spells away from the working environment can result in the body becoming less agile and supple for the typical working day. Ensure that when returning to work, you 'ease' your body back into working patterns avoiding sprains and strains and that all works have a suitable and sufficient RAMS in place to minimise all associated risk.



Guidance and associated notes

(Suitable for use with Tool Box Talks')

DO

- Ensure that the RAMS and plan for the day's work reflect the potential weather conditions
- Immediately report to your supervisor anyone suspected of showing signs of exposure or hypothermia
- Use all welfare facilities as required to ensure that clothes are dried and stored correctly
- Ensure that all materials are correctly stored and secured
- Report any adverse conditions that constitute a hazard such as ice
- Check all plant and equipment (including your car whether a company vehicle or not) for use before using in harsh conditions – check basic maintenance requirements and for any impact that previous weather conditions may have had
- Store materials safely:
 - * Chemicals as required by the manufacturers instructions
 - * They must be secure and in a stable condition (roofs should be avoided!)
- Ensure that all PPE is sufficient for the weather / work conditions and compatible other items of clothing or PPE that you need to wear
- Take regular breaks and take in hot food and drinks as necessary
- Remember that the body can be adversely affected by the combination of planned activities and the weather e.g. cold and vibration
- Remember that spells away from the working environment can result in the body becoming less agile and supple for the typical working day. Ensure that when returning to work, you 'ease' your body back into working patterns avoiding sprains and strains and that all works have a suitable and sufficient RAMS in place to minimise all associated risk.
- Consider the environment around you including neighbours, wildlife and watercourses

DON'T

- Arrive for or attempt to work under the influence of alcohol
- Attempt to work in extreme weather conditions such as high winds or heavy snow where the resulting risk to personal wellbeing is unreasonable
- Work in areas where task lighting is not suitable and sufficient – report this to your supervisor
- Work at any height or engage in lifting operations during high winds
- Engage in activities where the weather conditions have created additional hazards such as uneven or unsafe surfaces such as wash out from rain or flooded areas

As noted above, remember the dangers of being under the influence of Alcohol when at work. Alcohol can still be in your system the day after the night before. This should be considered when driving to work - a number of police authorities are warning motorists to expect breath testing 24 hours a day in a crack down on drunk driving and Costain will take action against any operative found to be under the influence whilst in work time.

Finally, those in safety critical posts and on 24 hour call must not forget their associated responsibilities.

“If in doubt - STOP and FIND OUT!”