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## *Ohio AgrAbility Fact Sheet Series*

# Injury Prevention: Working in Cold Weather

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**D**uring cold weather, work must be done around the farm, such as feeding livestock, breaking ice in the water trough, cutting wood, or loading stored grain. Even though it may be tempting to “tough it out” or “work through it,” prolonged exposure to cold, wet, and windy conditions can be dangerous, even at temperatures above freezing. At an increased risk are farmers who take certain medications, are in poor physical health, or suffer from illnesses such as diabetes, high blood pressure, or cardiovascular disease. When working in cold weather, precautions should be taken to minimize the risk of injuries like frostbite or hypothermia.

Clothing should be your first consideration when working in cold weather. Clothing should be selected to suit the temperature, weather conditions (e.g., wind speed, rain), and the level and duration of the activity.

### ***The following are clothing recommendations for working in cold environments:***

- Wear several layers of clothing. Trapped air between layers forms a protective insulation.
- Wear warm gloves, and keep an extra pair handy in case the first pair becomes wet.
- Wear a hat that provides protection for head, ears, and even face in extreme conditions. Forty percent

of a person’s body heat can be lost when the head is left exposed.

- Use the hoods of jackets or sweatshirts for added protection for your neck, head, face, and ears.
- Wear footwear appropriate for weather and work conditions. Footwear should not fit too tightly, which could reduce blood flow to the feet and increase the risk of a cold injury.
- Wear synthetic, wool, or silk clothing next to the skin to wick away moisture. Cotton clothing can lose insulating properties when it becomes damp or wet.

### ***Additional safety precautions while working in cold weather should include:***

- Avoid getting wet. Body heat is lost 24 times faster when clothing is wet.
- Take short, frequent breaks in areas sheltered from the elements, to allow the body to warm up.
- Avoid exhaustion and fatigue because energy is needed to keep muscles warm.
- Consume warm, high-calorie food to maintain energy reserves, such as pasta or hot cereal.
- Drink warm, sweet beverages to reduce the risk of dehydration, and avoid alcohol and caffeine.

- Work in pairs (buddy system), especially in remote areas, to keep an eye on each other and watch for signs of cold stress.
- Have a cell phone handy to call for help in the event of an emergency.
- Shield work areas from the elements to reduce wind chill or the chances of getting wet (windbreak, tent, or roof).
- Utilize insulating material on equipment handles, especially metal handles, when temperatures drop below 30°F.

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#### About AgrAbility Based Fact Sheets

These fact sheets were developed to promote success in agriculture for Ohio’s farmers and farm families coping with a disability or long-term health condition. AgrAbility offers information and referral materials such as this fact sheet, along with on-site assessment, technical assistance, and awareness in preventing secondary injuries. Fact sheets were developed with funding from NIFA, project number OHON0006.

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