

DAWG TRACKS

SAFETY NEWSLETTER

MS Agricultural & Forestry Experiment Station
MSU Extension Service



Winter storm *Fern* hit hard. As this is being written, many are without power and pray that today is the day it will come back on. While Mississippi normally doesn't see a lot of hard winters, it does not have to be ice or snow that causes conditions to become hazardous. Cold weather necessitates caution even if temperatures are above freezing numbers.

Cold Stress

Cold stress occurs by driving down the skin temperature, and eventually the internal body temperature. Wind and moisture can make the skin colder and conduct heat out of the body. This means that even if dressed warm, sweat from heavy exertion can saturate underclothes and conduct heat out of the body. When the body is unable to warm itself, serious cold-related illnesses and injuries may occur, permanent tissue damage or death may result.

Cold stress can result in trench foot, frostbite, or hypothermia. For prevention try to stay dry & take frequent breaks to warm up. Recognize reddening or white/gray patches on skin, tingling, numbness, uncontrollable shivering, loss of coordination, or slurred speech as danger signs to seek warm shelter quickly.

Tips for Working Outside in the Winter

- ✓ Eat healthy, high-calorie and high-carb foods such as pasta, and drink warm, sweet beverages.
- ✓ Have a heated, sheltered break area.
- ✓ Most importantly, dress properly ...
 - Wear layers of loose-fitting clothing. Layers provide better insulation. Tight clothing reduces blood circulation. Warm blood needs to be circulated to the extremities, so loose is better.

- A hat reduces the amount of body heat that escapes from your head and keeps your whole body warmer.
- Insulated gloves will help protect the hands and insulated /waterproof boots to protect the feet.
- ✓ Do not ignore shivering—it's an important first sign that your body is losing heat.

Be Prepared Before You Go on the Road.

- ✓ Keep your vehicle's gas tank close to full whenever possible.
- ✓ Keep your vehicle serviced. Extreme temperatures cause extreme stress on systems that may reveal problems in already stressful circumstances.
- ✓ Carry emergency items with you:
 - windshield scraper,
 - jumper cables, flashlight,
 - blankets for protection from the cold,
 - a cell phone charger & USB cord,
 - water, food, and any necessary medicine.

Watch Your Step

No matter if you battle the cold weather from inside or outside, fall risks are heightened. Keep your pathways around the house and office clear.

Inside, be cautious of extra blankets laying around & additional cords for supplemental heaters.

Outside, be super careful even if you just walk out to feed the animals or get in a vehicle. Many injuries happen on slick patches that continue to exist in shaded areas, even after temperatures get above freezing or re-freeze overnight, especially along sidewalks, steps, driveways, and porches.

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Sources:

<https://hsi.com/blog/recognizing-preventing-cold-stress>
<https://www.cdc.gov/winter-weather/safety/stay-safe-during-after-a-winter-storm-safety.html>