

Winter Safety – Clock the Time Change

Introduction:



The clocks went back an hour at 02:00 on Sunday 26th October. The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents says there is a surge in the number of accidents when the clocks go back. Casualty data shows more pedestrians are killed or injured in the afternoon and early evening rather than in the mornings, so please take extra care whether walking or driving during this period.

During the winter months the number of injuries also increases onsite. Particularly, where mobile construction plant can meet pedestrians and pedestrians are at risk of slips, trips or falls.

How the Clocks going back affect your Mind and Body

With the seasonal clock change, now is the time to assess the impact on working conditions onsite of darker evenings and winter weather. We need to reduce risks by planning ahead.

The time change affects our internal biological clock. It needs to re-synchronise, but this doesn't happen straight away. It usually takes up to three days for our brains and bodies to adjust to the one-hour shift. This can alter the quality of our sleep, making us more tired during the day. Reduced daylight and Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) can also affect people's susceptibility to fatigue and awareness both around construction plant onsite and during their daily commute.

It is therefore also important that leisure time is used to recuperate and avoid behaviours or practices that can contribute to fatigue and which could place colleagues and the public at risk.



Hazard Perception



Plant operators and vehicle drivers must take care when manoeuvring, only doing so when it's safe. They should ensure reversing aids are in good working order and windscreens clear of dirt.

This photograph illustrates the effects of low winter sun on general visibility! Lower lighting levels and adjusting to the clock change can present extra risk. Particular attention should be paid when approaching construction plant.

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Winter Planning

Why bother winter planning?

- Busy workload to deliver outputs
- Conditions are changing - light, weather, temperature
 - *Its wet, its dark, its cold*



What can we do?

1. Winter-proof our work areas

2. Plan any activities around the conditions

- Take into account the conditions and how they will affect the risk of the activity
- **STOP if anything changes**

Winter Working Basics

Daily tools we use to manage the risks on site:

1. RAMS

- Amended to reflect the change in weather conditions and ways of working.
- Fully briefed and signed with everyone clear on how to complete the activity safely.

2. Start of Shift Briefings

- Everyone is clear on what's happening on site and any actions to be taken due to changing weather.

3. Daily Debrief

- What went well today
- What can we improve the next day?

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Winter Proof your work area

Walkways and work areas:

- Keep all walkways and work areas well lit, especially at dusk and dawn, and report any lighting that isn't working.
- Look out for any paths/roads where water is pooling and get these areas filled on before pools of water turn to ice.
- Keep sufficient supplies of the correct grit available and located around the site so it is readily available to keep paths and roadways safe.



Check all equipment more frequently

- Plant and equipment must be checked daily for oil, water, hydraulic fluid levels etc. and damage.
- Pipes and hoses are less flexible when cold – so will crack more easily.
- Lag pipes where possible.



Check that plant operators can see what's around them:

- Screen wash should be provided and used (where plant has this feature).
- Frost, snow, mud and dirt must be removed from windows and mirrors before plant is used.
- Check that reversing cameras are not distorted by the sun (especially when it is low in the sky). The same effect can also be caused by vehicle headlights or spotlights.
- Plant operators must always disable plant before pedestrians enter exclusion zones.



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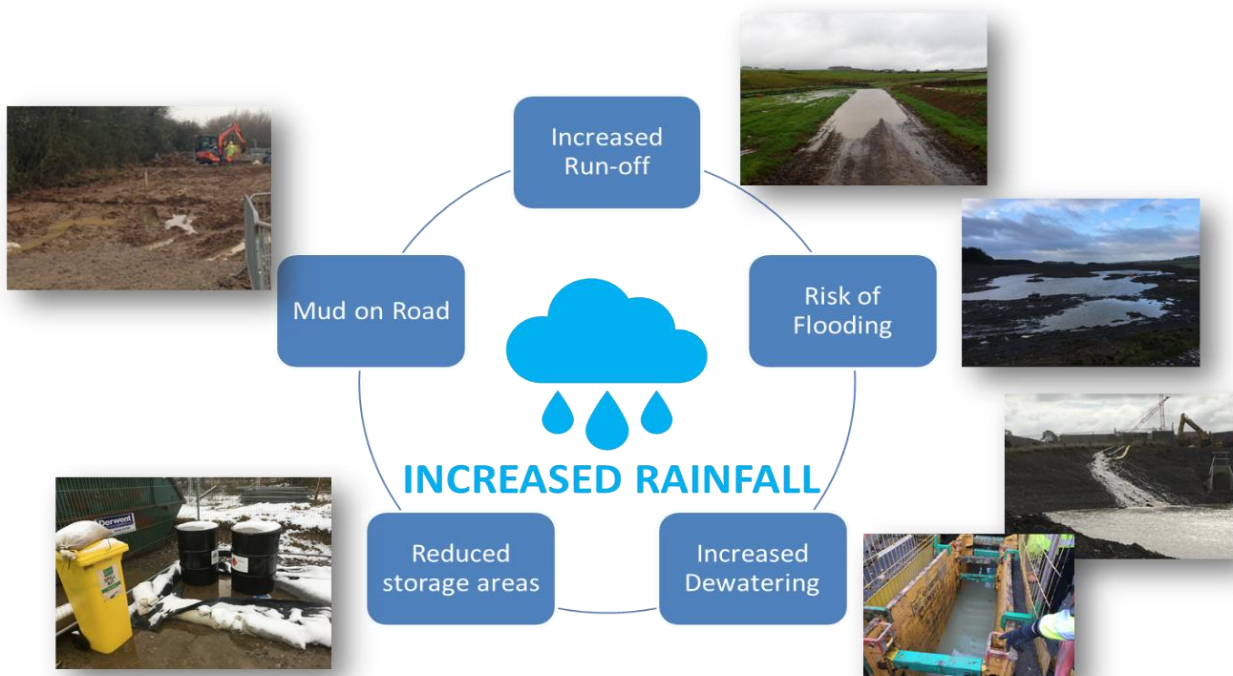
Winter Proof your work area

Your Health and Wellbeing / Mental Health Matters:

- Make sure you wrap up warm - almost half of all heat loss is through your head in cold weather.
- Hypothermia occurs when body heat is lost faster than it can be produced.
- Frostbite and immersion foot can occur at even moderately low temperature.
- Both Hypothermia and Frostbite can kill.
- The lower the temperature gets the more your concentration is affected – which can result in an increase of accidents.



Winter Working Environment



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Winter Working Recap

- Have you prepared your working areas for winter?
 - *Is there anywhere where water will collect and freeze over?*
 - *Is all task lighting suitable and sufficient*
 - *Are all walkways on site adequately lit and gritted?*
 - *Have you ordered sufficient grit for walkways and is there a clear plan of who will do this and when?*

- Plan your activities around the weather conditions
 - *How will the weather affect what we do on site?*
 - *Can excavations and Lifting operations be carried out in adequate daylight and not towards the end of the shift?*

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What do we need to do?

1. Adverse Weather:

Tie down, secure or cover loose materials, objects and skips, especially when high winds are expected.

Daylight hours are limited in winter. Make sure high-risk activities (excavations, lifting operations) can be carried out safely and in due time.

If in a floodplain or by a river, check for flood warnings. Identify if site drainage can handle heavy rains and put in additional measures where required.

2. PPE & Welfare:

No hats or hoods must be worn under hard hats.

Tinted safety glasses need to be replaced with clear / yellow lenses.

Make sure PPE is clean and that the Hi-Viz strips are in good condition. Request new PPE where necessary.

Request hard hat liners if required.

Welfare facilities must be heated with hot water and drying rooms adequate to dry clothes overnight.

3. Equipment:

Lag pipes where possible to provide adequate welfare facilities and prevent site / closure lost time.

Operatives working on roofs or near leading edges must use chin straps and tethered tools to prevent them falling.

Check all equipment more frequently. Pipes and hoses are less flexible when cold so are liable to cracking easier.

4. Freezing:

Look out for any paths where water is pooling and get these areas filled in to prevent slippery walkways.

Ensure site paths are well maintained and lit adequately. Consider the use of automatic PIR lighting.

Remember: wet clothes feel 20% colder than dry clothes.

Water in wet concrete can freeze, resulting in crystals forming in the mix and the dried concrete failing to reach its full strength. NEVER place concrete on frozen ground or into ice or snow.

5. Driving:

Remove frost, snow and dirt from windows and mirrors before operating plant / driving a vehicle.

Prior to driving undertake a vehicle check: Petrol – Oil – Water – Damage – Electrics – Rubber (POWDER).

Check the local and national weather forecasts for travel information before setting off or planning journeys*.

Ensure sufficient supplies of grit are readily available and located around the site.

6. Wellbeing:

Remember to get your flu jab.

The colder you become, the more your concentration is affected. Make sure you wrap up warm and use simple Stretch and Flex exercises to reduce the likelihood of accidents.

Whilst working in extreme conditions, consider additional breaks.

Darker, colder days can cause seasonal affective disorder** (winter depression). Look after your mates.

*Sign up to Met Office Weather Warnings - <https://service.govdelivery.com/accounts/UKMETOFFICE/subscriber/new>

**For more information on Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) visit: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/seasonal-affective-disorder-sad/>

