



TAILGATE

HUMAN-CENTRED HEALTH and SAFETY TRAINING MATERIALS

TOOLBOX TALK: Winter Rescue Planning - Work at Heights

Date: _____ Crew / Site: _____

How to Use This Safety Talk

This is a short, practical conversation – not a lecture. Use your own words. Tie it to today's weather, the type of work you're doing, and the fall protection systems on this site. You don't need to scare anyone. You just need to be clear.

This can be used as an introduction to a "rescue training session" or as a reminder of the rescue plan before work begins.

Opening

Before we start work today, I want to talk about **rescue planning in winter** – and why we don't treat it the same way we do in warmer conditions.

This isn't about expecting something to go wrong. It's about being honest about what happens *if* it does.

We've already talked about fall protection, anchors, and equipment checks. But none of that matters if we don't also ask a simple question:

If someone is left hanging or injured at height in these conditions – how do we get them down?

Why This Matters

- Winter changes rescue timelines.
- Cold temperatures increase the risk of **suspension trauma**, shock, and hypothermia.
- Bulky clothing slows movement.
- Ice, wind, and snow make access harder.

A delay that might be survivable in summer can become life-threatening in winter. That's why rescue planning is not a paperwork exercise – it's a **condition of working at height**.

“911 Is Not the Rescue Plan”

It's important we're clear about this. Calling 911 is emergency support, not a rescue plan.

Fire services:

- Are not guaranteed to arrive quickly in winter weather
- May not have access to roofs, scaffolds, or suspended workers
- May not perform technical rescues at construction sites

Under Ontario law, the employer must plan for rescue. That responsibility does not transfer to emergency services. If our plan is “we'll call 911 and hope,” then we don't actually have a plan.

What a Winter Rescue Plan Must Answer

Before work at height continues today, we must be able to answer:

- Who is responsible for initiating a rescue?
- What equipment is available on site to perform that rescue?
- Who is trained or competent to use it?
- How long would it realistically take to get someone down in this weather?
- At what point do conditions make rescue impractical or unsafe?

If we can't answer those questions clearly, the work doesn't proceed.

What We're Doing Differently Today

Because it's winter, we are being intentional:

- We confirm a **site-specific rescue method** before work begins
- We verify rescue equipment is available, accessible, and suitable for cold conditions
- We consider weather impacts on timing and access
- We confirm workers understand stop-work authority
- We reassess the plan if conditions change

If rescue cannot be performed safely and promptly in today's conditions, **work at height is postponed or an alternative method is used.**

What I Expect from You

- If you don't understand the rescue plan, ask.
- If something changes – weather, access, equipment, staffing – speak up before continuing.
- Stopping work because rescue isn't possible is not overreacting. It's exercising judgment.
- You have a duty to report unsafe conditions, including situations where a rescue would be delayed or unrealistic.

Quick Crew Check-In (Optional)

- If someone fell or was suspended right now, how would we get them down?
- Is today's weather affecting that plan?

TOOLBOX TALK: Winter Rescue Planning for Work at Heights

Attendance Sheet

Company/Site: _____

Date: _____ Supervisor Name: _____

Workers in Attendance:

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

4 _____

5 _____

6 _____

7 _____

8 _____

9 _____

10 _____

11 _____

12 _____

13 _____

14 _____

15 _____

Winter Use - Rescue Plan Checklist - OHSA / O. Reg. 213/91 Aligned Control Checklist

Project / Location: _____ Date: _____

Supervisor: _____

Type of SRL/PFL (Make, Model): _____

Temperature and Weather Conditions Today: _____

Item	Pass	Fail	Controls/Comments
RESCUE PLANNING & PREPARATION (O. Reg. 213/91 – s. 26.1, s. 79; OHSA s. 25(2)(h))			
Site-specific rescue plan identified before work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Rescue method appropriate for task and height	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Rescue plan accounts for winter conditions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Rescue responsibilities clearly assigned	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
RESCUE EQUIPMENT & ACCESS (O. Reg. 213/91 – s. 93; CSA Z259)			
Rescue equipment available on site	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Equipment suitable for cold temperatures	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Equipment protected from ice and moisture	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Access routes for rescue confirmed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
WORKER COMPETENCY & COMMUNICATION (OHSA s. 25, s. 27, s. 28)			
Workers briefed on rescue plan	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Workers know who to contact in an emergency	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Workers understand stop-work authority	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Rescue drills or reviews conducted as required	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
ENVIRONMENTAL & WEATHER CONDITIONS (OHSA s. 25(2)(h))			
Temperature and wind assessed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Weather does not unreasonably delay rescue	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Visibility adequate for rescue operations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Rescue plan reassessed if conditions change	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
EMERGENCY RESPONSE INTEGRATION			
Emergency services role clearly understood	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
911 identified as support – not primary rescue	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Site access information available if needed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

