



TAILGATE

HUMAN-CENTRED HEALTH and SAFETY TRAINING MATERIALS

TOOLBOX TALK: Standard Operating Procedure

How to Use This Safety Talk: Winter Safety for Work at Heights

1. Purpose

This SOP provides supervisors with a **simple, consistent method** for delivering winter safety toolbox talks related to work at heights.

Winter conditions such as cold temperatures, snow, ice, reduced daylight, bulky clothing, and moisture-affected equipment can change how work at heights is performed and how safety systems function. These talks are designed to help supervisors **pause work, reset expectations, and adjust controls** when winter conditions introduce additional risk. The intent is not to replace training or procedures, but to support **real-time supervision, communication, and decision-making** in winter conditions.

2. When to Use These Talks

Supervisors shall deliver a Winter Work at Heights toolbox talk:

- At the start of winter work at heights
- When temperatures drop, weather changes, or conditions deteriorate
- Before using access or fall protection equipment affected by cold or moisture
- When rushing, reduced visibility, or equipment performance is observed
- Following a near miss, equipment concern, or weather-related stop-work
- These talks may be delivered during toolbox meetings, pre-task briefings, or immediately before work begins.

These winter safety talks are intended as **guides, not scripts**. Supervisors are encouraged to adapt the language, examples, and emphasis to reflect:

- The specific work being performed that day
- Current and forecasted weather conditions
- The site-specific access equipment, fall protection systems, and anchors in use
- Site-specific hazards, near misses, or recent observations

3. How to Deliver the Talk (Supervisor Guidance)

Supervisors shall:

- Deliver the talk **in their own words**, using the provided guide
- Keep the conversation **short, practical, and focused on today's conditions**
- Reference the specific equipment, access method, or task being used
- Avoid lecturing, blaming, or overloading workers with technical detail

Supervisors should emphasize that:

- Winter risk is about **changing conditions**, not lack of skill
- Equipment may behave differently in cold weather
- Slowing down and reassessing is an expected part of safe winter work
- Where appropriate, supervisors may:
 - Demonstrate equipment function (e.g., SRL lock-up test)
 - Point out site-specific winter hazards
 - Ask one or two quick check-in questions to confirm understanding

4. Supervisor Authority & Expectations

Supervisors are expected to observe work for signs that winter conditions are increasing risk, including:

- Slips, loss of balance, or reduced mobility
- Equipment not functioning as intended
- Rushing due to cold or daylight limitations
- Encourage workers to speak up about unsafe conditions

Take reasonable steps to adjust:

- Work pace
- Access methods
- Equipment selection or use
- Supervision levels

If winter hazards cannot be adequately controlled, supervisors **shall stop work** until conditions improve or controls are implemented.

5. Worker Participation

Workers are expected to:

- Participate in winter toolbox talks
- Follow instructions related to access and fall protection
- Report concerns related to weather, footing, access, or equipment performance
- Stop work and notify supervision if conditions become unsafe

6. Documentation

Delivery of winter toolbox talks may be documented in:

- Toolbox meeting records
- Daily hazard assessments
- Supervisor logs

Documentation should confirm:

- Date
- Topic
- Crew present
- Any actions taken

Documentation supports due diligence by demonstrating active supervision and hazard awareness.

7. Important Note

These toolbox talks:

- Do **not** replace training, inspections, or engineered controls
- Do **not** override manufacturer instructions or site-specific rescue plans
- Are intended to support safe decision-making **in real winter conditions**