WEEK 45 EARLY NOVEMBER · ~5 MIN READ · ONTARIO CONSTRUCTION

Cold Weather Preparedness

The first hard freeze comes fast in Ontario. It catches crews before anyone's back in the habit of watching their footing — and it catches the site too: a cracked water line, a hose frozen solid, a machine that ran fine yesterday. An hour of prep now keeps people on their feet; the saved machines are the bonus.

The hazard

Frozen ground and overnight ice hide slip and trip hazards — pooled water, wet plywood, churned mud all turn slick by morning, and the slips start before the first real snow. The cold is hard on the site itself too: water expands when it freezes and splits pipes, pumps and fittings, fuel can gel, and batteries lose capacity. A site that isn't ready loses mornings to burst lines and machines that won't start.

What to do — people first

- **Give the surfaces an owner, all shift.** Work areas, the routes to and from them, and scaffold platforms in use have to be kept clear of snow and ice and sanded when footing needs it — **at all times, not once in the morning.** Assign who inspects, clears, and re-treats as conditions change, and close a route that can't yet be made safe.
- **Stockpile sand, salt, or grit now**, at the entrances, stairs, and walkways where it'll be needed, and keep it topped up.
- **Get the shovels, scrapers, and a working snow blower on site** before the first storm, not during it.
- **Check the warm-up arrangements** — somewhere genuinely warm, and a break schedule that will flex with wind chill once it drops.

Then the site and the gear

- **Drain water lines, pumps, hoses, and pressure washers at the end of the day.** If you blow lines out with compressed air, do it the way the equipment's instructions say — regulated pressure, eye protection, nobody in the discharge path. Improvised air is its own injury.
- **Fuel, coolant, and batteries follow the manufacturer's specification for that machine**, not a rule of thumb. Winter fuel and conditioner ahead of the cold, coolant checked against its rated protection, block heaters used as the maker intends — and inspect the cords and connections before you plug anything in outside.
- **Store small tools, batteries, and adhesives per their instructions.** Cold flattens battery charge and ruins some glues and sealants; heated storage helps, but check what the product actually calls for.

Watch out for

- Pooled water that becomes a hidden sheet of ice by morning.
- A machine that cranks slow or won't start — that's a warning, not just a delay. Don't force it.
- Hoses or lines left full "just for tonight." That's how they split.
- Damaged extension cords and block-heater leads under snow — a wet, damaged cord outdoors is an electrical hazard, not an inconvenience.

Talk it over

- Where will ice show up first here — shaded walkways, ramps, plywood, stairs — and who's checking and re-treating them tomorrow morning?
- What on this site still has water in it right now?
- Is the warm-up area actually warm, and does everyone know where it is?

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