



Rest Breaks for Cold Store Workers

For the purposes of this guidance a cold store is defined as a warehouse storing goods at temperatures below zero degrees Celsius. There is no designated requirement for specific breaks for employees working in cold stores. Break times must be sufficient in time and frequency to allow workers adequate re-warming.

In frozen food storage environments more frequent breaks will be required.

There should be special arrangements for the welfare of personnel who are exposed to low temperatures for extended periods. These will include the provision of suitable thermal protective clothing and warming rooms with drinks dispensers.

Suitable and sufficient breaks should be arranged, based on a comprehensive risk assessment. This risk assessment needs to take into account many factors including the individual, the work activity and the temperature of the working environment.

Risk Assessment Factors to Consider:

Temperature – work environment;
 Other Environmental Factors – e.g. oxygen reduced systems;
 Length – time exposed;
 Task(s) – cold affects mental reactions and dexterity skills;
 Health – of the individual (health screening of employees prior to starting work, medical condition(s) e.g. asthma, Raynaud's Phenomenon);
 Age of the employee (young person / older worker);
 Means of escape – entrapment in cold environment;
 Task Rotation – limit exposure times to extreme temperatures;
 PPE provision – several layers of thin clothing better than one thick layer;
 Rest Facilities – available, heated, drying facilities, drinks available;
 Supervision – of employees (following work systems i.e. breaks taken / PPE worn appropriately);
 Information – employees on signs of cold stress (BFFF advice for employees' guidance);
 Local Heating cabs (Mechanical Handling Equipment).

Further information Sources:

HSE guidance HSG76 'Warehousing and storage- A guide to health and safety'. <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/priced/hsg76.pdf> includes a temperature- controlled storage section and makes reference to working breaks and the necessity for a comprehensive risk assessment. Page 125 -135 (paragraphs 690 – 731).

BS7915:1998 – Ergonomics of the thermal environment – Guide to the design & evaluation of working practices for cold indoor environments

BS EN ISO 15743:2008 Ergonomics of the Thermal Environment – cold workplaces, risk assessment & management.

These documents are available to purchase only from the British Standards Institute and are a technical guide to working in cold environments.