



PROTECTING AGAINST COVID AND THE COLD

Roofing contractors are advised to guard against the twin challenges of COVID-19 and harsh winter weather working conditions to counter unprecedented health and safety-related dangers on site.

By taking the time to consider current practices, update training and take some practical measures, roof systems manufacturer, Marley believes roofers will be in a stronger position to protect themselves against COVID and the impact of cold weather during the winter months that lie ahead.

As the year-long health crisis continues to impact how site workers operate within socially distanced guidelines, the added weather-related reality of strong winds, freezing temperatures, snow, ice, and rain, create extra hazards on building sites - particularly for those working at height.

With the early weeks of 2021 already delivering plunging temperatures across the country, and a third national lockdown forcing many to look again at how they can go about their business in a COVID-safe way, Marley believes now is the time to reassess working practices and safety measures to ensure everyone can come through the winter months safely.

The COVID effect

As an example, in winter there are likely to be additional demands on welfare facilities, which could affect current social distancing rules and there is a greater use of PPE. Self-isolation requirements are also likely to put greater pressure on workforces, alongside the regular cold and flu season.

Health risks from working in cold conditions

Bitterly cold weather, ice and shorter periods of daylight mean there is a much greater risk of accidents on construction sites during the winter months. As well as the risk of slips and falls, prolonged exposure to the cold can cause construction workers to suffer from more colds, bronchitis, asthma, painful joints, and fatigue. In extreme cases, workers outside for long periods,





without the right protection, could even suffer hypothermia and frostbite.

For managers, site supervisors and roofing contractors working this winter, reviewing a simple checklist can help alleviate potential dangers of cold weather working on roofs, whilst remaining COVID compliant.

1. Review policies

Check that your winter safety policy is compatible with the latest COVID site operating procedures from the CLC (www.constructionleadershipcouncil.co.uk) and update it if necessary. You can also refer to the NFRC guidance notes for specific information for the roofing sector (www.nfrc.co.uk/COVID-19/coronavirus).

2. Clear guidance

Make sure there is clear guidance about COVID symptoms and when employees are expected to self-isolate.

3. Review welfare facilities to ensure there is enough capacity

It is recommended that construction workers take breaks in heated areas with access to hot drinks. This means there is often greater pressure on welfare facilities, and they can become more crowded. Construction sites need to ensure there is adequate space for workers to socially distance in communal areas.

4. Winter hazards and PPE

Make sure workers are trained on winter hazards and ensure they have the appropriate PPE for the weather conditions. Re-usable PPE should be thoroughly cleaned after use and not shared between workers. Single-use PPE should be disposed of so it cannot be reused.

5. Monitor the weather forecast to anticipate and prepare for poor weather conditions

Carry out a risk assessment every day to check that it is safe to work and that conditions have not changed. Pay particular attention to working at height platforms and do not work on roofs in icy conditions - this is a requirement of the Working at Height Regulations 2005.