Weather: Heat, Cold, Wind and Rain Toolbox Talk

Key points, do's and don'ts, and questions with answers. The attendance sign-off sheet is on the last page.

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Key points to cover

- Employers must assess weather-related risks as part of their general risk assessment under the Management Regulations 1999
- Heat stress — provide shade, water, rest breaks, and reschedule heavy work away from peak heat hours (11am-3pm)
- Sun protection — UV radiation causes skin cancer even on cloudy days. Cover up, use SPF30+ sunscreen, and check skin regularly
- Cold — provide warm welfare facilities, hot drinks, appropriate clothing, and limit exposure time in severe cold
- Wind — stop crane operations, work at height, and sheeting operations when wind speeds exceed safe limits specified in risk assessments
- Rain — wet surfaces increase slip risk, visibility is reduced, and waterlogged ground can affect excavation stability and plant operations
- Lightning — evacuate to shelter immediately if thunder is heard; do not shelter under isolated trees, masts, or near tall structures

Do's and don'ts

Do

- Check the weather forecast daily and adjust the programme of work accordingly
- Drink at least 6-8 glasses of water per day in normal conditions, and more in hot weather
- Apply SPF30+ sunscreen to all exposed skin including the back of the neck, ears, and tops of hands
- Take regular breaks in shaded or heated areas depending on the conditions
- Stop work at height if wind speeds exceed the limits in the task-specific risk assessment

Don't

- Never ignore early signs of heat illness — headache, dizziness, nausea, and confusion require immediate action
- Never work with bare torsos in the sun — UV radiation causes over 1,500 cases of skin cancer per year in UK outdoor workers
- Never assume cold conditions are just uncomfortable — hypothermia causes loss of dexterity and impaired judgement, leading to falls and accidents
- Never continue crane or lifting operations in wind speeds above the limits specified by the crane manufacturer and lift plan
- Never shelter under isolated trees, scaffolding, or tall structures during lightning storms

Questions to check understanding

Ask each question and let the crew answer before you read out the answer.

Q1. What are the signs of heat stroke and what should you do?

Answer: Heat stroke is a medical emergency. Signs include: hot, dry skin (sweating may have stopped), a body temperature above 40°C, confusion, slurred speech, loss of consciousness, and seizures. Call 999 immediately. Move the person to a cool area, remove outer clothing, and cool them rapidly with cold water, wet towels, or fanning. Do not give them fluids if they are confused or unconscious. Heat stroke can kill within minutes if untreated.

Q2. Why are construction workers at higher risk of skin cancer?

Answer: Outdoor workers are exposed to much more UV radiation than indoor workers because of the time they spend outside. UV radiation damages skin cells even on cloudy days — up to 80% of UV penetrates cloud cover. Construction workers are often exposed for 8+ hours per day and may not apply or reapply sunscreen. Common areas affected include the back of the neck, ears, forearms, and face. HSE leaflet INDG147 ('Keep your top on') identifies outdoor workers as a high-risk group and recommends covering up, using SPF30+ sunscreen, and checking skin regularly for changes.

Q3. At what wind speed should work at height typically stop?

Answer: There is no single legal wind speed limit — it depends on the task, equipment, and risk assessment. However, as general guidance: tower cranes typically cease operation at 38 mph (Force 7); mobile cranes follow the manufacturer's wind speed limits in the lift plan; work on scaffolding and open structures usually stops at around 23 mph (Force 5); and sheeting or cladding operations stop at lower speeds due to the sail effect. The risk assessment for each task must specify the wind speed limit.

Attendance sign-off sheet: Weather: Heat, Cold, Wind and Rain Toolbox Talk

Everyone who attended prints their name and signs to confirm they received this talk.

Date _____ **Time** _____

Site or location _____ **Presented by** _____

No.	Name (print)	Company	Signature
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Presenter's signature _____

This is general guidance for UK construction sites. Check it against your own risk assessment, method statement and the site before you deliver it. Toolbox talk from The Site Book, reviewed 26 October 2026. Read it online at thesitebook.co.uk/toolbox-talks/weather.