

TOOLBOX TALK – ‘Winter Readiness’

Contributor: John Egan, CIF

Being winter ready in construction means ensuring that your site, welfare facilities, workforce, vehicles, and equipment are all prepared to remain productive, safe, and compliant throughout cold, wet, windy, or icy conditions. The accompanying checklist is a non-exhaustive guide to help you plan and implement effective winter-readiness measures.

(John Egan, Executive, Safety, Health & Skills, CIF)

Contributor’s Shared Advice:

1. Vehicular Transport

- Ensure all **indicators, headlamps, and wipers** are clean and fully operational.
- Check levels of **coolant, antifreeze, and screen wash**.
- Maintain oil and fluid levels and inspect for **leaks** beneath the vehicle.
- Check **tyre tread depth and pressure**, including the spare tyre.
- Verify **safety assist technologies** are active:
 - **Anti-lock Braking System (ABS)** – prevents wheel lock-up during braking.
 - **Electronic Stability Control (ESC)** – helps maintain control during skids.
 - **Traction Control System (TCS)** – reduces wheel spin on slippery surface.
- Carry an **emergency kit** (high-vis vest, warning triangle, torch, de-icer, water, snacks).
- **Reduce speed** and be extra vigilant of pedestrians/cyclists during adverse weather.

2. Site Access

- Ensure **clear signage** and **adequate lighting** for entry/exit routes.
- **Segregate pedestrians and plant** where possible.
- Enforce **PPE compliance** (high-visibility clothing per EN ISO 20471).
- Maintain **safe ground conditions** and consider use of gravel/mats in muddy areas.
- Keep **walkways, stairs, and roads clear of ice** and retain stocks of grit/salt.
- Ensure **drainage systems** prevent standing or freezing water.

3. Lighting

- Provide **sufficient lighting** across all areas (e.g., site, pedestrian routes, car parks).
- Confirm **temporary and permanent lighting** are rated, tested, and functional.

4. Equipment

- Inspect **ladders, scaffolds, and elevated areas** for frost, ice, and for objects that may be transported by heavy wind.
- **Cover machinery and materials** against frost/rain.
- Use **heated/insulated enclosures** for temperature-sensitive operations (e.g., concrete curing).

5. Welfare Arrangements

- Provide **shelter** for workers (where >5 persons at work), a means for drying wet clothing, facilities for boiling water and (where appropriate) for food preparation.
 - Regularly inspect **welfare facilities** (heating, plumbing, lighting) against [requirements](#).
 - **Insulate water pipes** and have a plan to **isolate supply** in case of burst pipes.
 - Ensure all workers have **cold-weather PPE** (e.g., thermal jackets, gloves and headgear).
-

6. Mobile Plant & Machinery

- Verify **lights, mirrors, and beacons** are in good order.
 - Conduct **daily pre-start checks** for ice buildup and traction.
-

7. Excavations

- Inspect **excavations** following severe weather.
 - **Barricade and highlight** all excavation areas with rigid barriers/blocks.
-

8. Emergency Arrangements

- Maintain **emergency response procedures** and **contact lists**.
 - Establish **holiday callout rotas** for emergency site response.
 - Regularly **monitor weather forecasts** and adjust work plans accordingly.
-

9. Weather Warning Levels

Status	Meaning
Yellow	Localized, potentially dangerous weather
Orange	Dangerous and infrequent conditions
Red	Severe and life-threatening weather

For Further Information:

- www.winterready.ie / [Be Winter Ready Booklet \(2024-2025\)](#)
- [Winter-proofing for water supplies](#)
- www.rsa.ie / www.tii.ie
- www.met.ie
- www.flooding.ie / www.floodinfo.ie
- www.emergencyplanning.ie
- [Construction welfare facilities](#)