Working in the Rain

Employees working in the rain face additional hazards, such as poor visibility and wet, slippery surfaces. Here are work practices that will help prevent accidents and injuries when working in the rain.

- Move more slowly and carefully. When working in the rain, a natural reaction is to try to work more quickly to get back inside as soon as possible. However, because rain makes everything more slippery, you should do the exact opposite—work more slowly and deliberately to prevent slipping and falling, especially when climbing ladders.

- Use the correct equipment. Do not use electrical tools and equipment that are not specifically rated for outdoor use when working in the rain. When using hand tools, use tools with textured, nonslip grip handles.

- Wear appropriate rain gear. If you are cold and wet, you are likely concentrating more on how miserable you are than the work at hand. Rain gear which includes both a coat and pants or overalls and is ventilated should be worn for prolonged wet-weather work. If it's cold and rainy, wool or synthetic fibers specifically designed for cold weather use are the best for wear under rain gear because it will keep you warm even if it gets wet. Also, wear rain gear that is the proper size; if it's too large it may interfere with movement.

- Wear appropriate footwear. Footwear for use in inclement weather should have deep treads to help prevent slipping. Footwear that is in poor condition (treads are worn down or worn smooth or footwear with holes) should not be worn. To keep water out of shoes or boots, make sure the top of the shoe or boot extends above the ankle and rain gear extends to the ankles. Also, the top of the boot or shoe should be inside the pant leg (as opposed to tucking the pant leg into the footwear).

- Use proper hand protection. When doing work requiring a sure grip (using hand tools, for example), wear gloves that fit snugly and provide a nonslip grip. To prevent water from entering gloves, make sure that the sleeve of the glove is either tight fitting or is long enough that it fits under the cuff of your raincoat.

- Ensure that you can see. If wearing goggles or eyeglasses, use antifogging sprays or wipes on them before going outside. Be sure that the area you are working in is well lit; if needed, light the area using lights rated for outdoor use. Wear hoods or hats to keep rain out of your eyes. Also, since hoods on rain gear narrow your range of vision, make it a point to turn your head to look both ways and above and below you when wearing a hood in the rain.

- Make sure that you can be seen. If working in an area where there is vehicular traffic (trucks, cars, forklifts, etc.), always wear bright-colored, reflective vests or rain gear, even during the day.