



California Independent Grocers Association

• REPRESENTING INDEPENDENT GROCERS IN CALIFORNIA •

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Cold Storage Safety

Cold storage spaces include refrigerator or freezer boxes or rooms in which food and other materials can be stored or processed at controlled, cool temperatures. When you work in and around such spaces, get training and be aware of the hazards that might be involved with cold storage: cold stress, slips and trips, confined space, chemical storage, and ergonomics.

Dress in warm, layered clothing for proper insulation to maintain your body temperature to prevent cold stress. Your head loses the most body heat; for extra warmth, wear a warm cap with ear flaps. Fingers, hands, toes, and feet are susceptible to frostbite with long term exposure to cold; protect them with insulated, moisture-proof gloves and boots.

Choose gloves appropriate to your job tasks; adequate gripping surfaces help you securely grasp cold or frozen objects. These objects can be heavy; a firm grip and steel-toe boots protect your toes. Ensure that your boots have no-slip soles; water and ice are common in cold storage and pose slip and trip hazards.

Because cold storage areas may be confined spaces, get training and become familiar with the safety features at your worksite. For escape in an emergency, cold storage rooms should have at least one door that opens from the inside. Lighting must be supplied through a constantly burning bulb or a light with an illuminated switch located inside the cold room. Non-slip flooring mats protect workers in wet areas.

Ideally, cold storage spaces have doors that are designed not to freeze shut. If anti-freeze doors are not installed in your workplace, ensure that a firefighter's axe is stored in the room. Exceptions to this rule include mental and corrective institutions and cold storage with temperatures above 32 degrees Fahrenheit.

Items in cold storage are often valuable and require security. Doors at your worksite may be locked from the outside provided the door has an inside release mechanism. Other options include posting warning signage on the door and providing audible and visible signal systems inside the room that are tested daily.

Ensure that chemicals in cold storage are stocked properly and with compatible materials. Take caution with dry ice and liquid nitrogen which can pose an asphyxiation hazard by displacing oxygen. Note that forklifts and combustion equipment can cause fumes to build up in enclosed spaces – use only with proper ventilation.

You can keep cold storage areas safe. Protect yourself from strains and sprains; always lift reasonable loads using proper lifting techniques. Watch out for your co-workers and check cold storage areas periodically and at closing to ensure no one is trapped. Clean up spills and clutter for good housekeeping and to prevent slip and trip hazards.

Follow cold storage safety principles and you won't be left out in the cold.