



Walk-in Cooler & Freezer Safety

You may not think about your walk-in freezers and coolers often, but they are critical to your business success. Emergency repairs or loss of perishables can be costly. The cost of an employee injury, however, could be far worse.

Common accidents in walk-in coolers and freezers include:

- Slips on water or ice accumulations
- Slips from spillages of food or liquid
- Trips over boxes or other items being stored on the floor
- Overexertion strains while maneuvering stock
- Jammed or caught in-between walk-in cooler or freezer door
- Inhalation of lethal fumes – such as carbon dioxide vapors from dry ice
- Hypothermia due to working or being trapped in a walk-in freezer with subzero temperatures

What can be done to prevent these types of accidents?

- Provide employee training on cooler/freezer safety specific to your operation.
- Conduct routine inspections and address problems immediately.
- Regularly check cold storage areas throughout the work day and at closing to assure no one is trapped inside.
- Ensure that lighting is in place and functional.
- Provide textured freezer floor surface or slip-resistant mats.
- Remove condensation, standing water or ice from the floor.

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- Complete weekly removal of ice build-up. Ice accumulation may be an indication that the heat strip is not functioning and should be addressed immediately.
- Assure door latches are functioning properly.
- Verify interior panic-release hardware, or firefighter axe, is in place and fully operational.
- Have jackets available for employees to wear when entering or stocking a cooler or freezer.
- Enforce use of gloves, hats and coats for extended work in cold conditions
- Provide access to a stepladder. Prohibit use of makeshift ladders such as milk crates to reach top tier stock.
- Develop a buddy check system for employees who complete extended periods of work in a freezer or cooler.
- Enforce good housekeeping standards
 - o Keep walkways free of stock
 - o Check that all product is packed correctly
 - o Assure that stock is neatly arranged on the shelves
 - o Ensure heavier items are stocked at waist height
 - o Remove spilled or spoiled product

Note: Child labor laws prohibit workers younger than age 16 from performing freezer or meat cooler work.

Maintaining a clean and organized freezer will reduce the potential for employee accidents. Contact your CompWest loss control consultant if you have questions or need additional direction.

