

ULTRA ACCESS November Newsletter

Modular Layering: why a few thin layers beats single, thick clothing

When working outside on scaffolding in cold, windy, or wet conditions - which in Britain can be from September to April..., having 3 - 5 "intelligent" **Modular Layers** outperform one or two bulky garments for three physiological reasons; superior moisture management - meaning that you will become cold less quickly, adjustable insulation - they can be removed or replaced as and when the weather / temperature changes, and they provide better heat retention with less sweat.

A single thick jacket traps this moisture inside, turning you clammy and cold, leaving you dangerously close to getting hypothermia in the coldest of days, when the body has to work harder to stay warm, creating more sweat.

Modular Layering solves this:

1. **Single Base layer** (for upper body wicking): synthetic or merino next-to-skin garments pull sweat away from the skin into outer layers, keeping the skin dry and reducing evaporative cooling. Dry skin feels warmer and you sweat less because the body doesn't need to overcompensate - think of a Vest, or a tight fitting round-neck T-Shirt - and for your legs, this could be Long Johns.
2. **1-2 Mid layers** (for upper body insulating -): think of 1 or 2 thin tops, like a Polo Shirt, or long sleeve "Mid-Zip" Technical / or Micro Fleece or a Wool Pullover to trap still air (the actual insulator) more efficiently than one thick equivalent. You can remove a layer during heavy lifting to prevent overheating and excessive sweating, whilst still remaining somewhat warm and dry(ish) - decent combat trousers would be recommended for your legs, here - due to their versatility and the extra pockets.
3. **An Outerlayer Windproof/Waterproof Softshell / Hardshell Jacket** (for upper body protection) worn under the (usually) mandatory Hi-Vis Vests blocks wind chill and rain without trapping all the vapour inside (modern breathable membranes allow moisture to escape outward), or they might have under armpit zipped airflow "pockets" to release excess air, when needed.
4. **Hi-Vis Vest** keeps you warmer still around your core and - most importantly visible to others, especially plant and equipment on site. It also helps to protect the critical Waterproof/Windproof Jacket which sits underneath, helping to avoid any holes forming in the shoulder area - so they can actually work and keep the wind/rain off. When they rip, replace them to save your jacket...

NOTE: your hands, feet and head is where your body loses heat from the quickest, so maybe add an extra pair of socks and wear gloves, etc.

The end result of Modular Layering: one stays warmer with less bulk, is more flexible, sweats far less, and can regulate their temperature dynamically, with removal or replacement of the layers, as and when required.

Less sweat = less chilling = genuine warmth even after many hours outside in the cold / rain.

Ultimately, its your choice, but this method of Modular Layering is the preferred method of clothing for many outdoor experts the world over...



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