

FROSTBITE

What happens to the body:

Freezing in deep layers of skin and tissue; pale, waxy-white skin color; skin becomes hard and numb; usually affects fingers, hands, toes, feet, ears, and nose.

What to do: (land temperatures)

- Move the person to a warm, dry area. Don't leave the person alone.
- Remove wet or tight clothing that may cut off blood flow to the affected area.
- **Do not** rub the affected area because rubbing damaged the skin and tissue.
- Gently place the affected area in a warm water bath (105°) and monitor the water temperature to **slowly** warm the tissue. Don't pour warm water directly on the affected area because it will warm the tissue too fast, causing tissue damage. Warming takes 25-40 minutes.
- After the affected area has been warmed, it may become puffy and blister. The affected area may have a burning feeling or numbness. When normal feeling, movement, and skin color have returned, the affected area should be dried and wrapped to keep it warm.
Note: If there is a chance the affected area may get cold again, do not warm the skin. If the skin is warmed and then becomes cold again, it will cause severe tissue damage.
- Seek medical attention as soon as possible.

How to Protect Workers

- Recognize the environmental and workplace conditions that lead to potential cold-induced illnesses and injuries.
- Learn the signs and symptoms of cold-induced illnesses/injuries and what to do to help the worker.
- Train workers about cold-induced illnesses and injuries.
- Select proper clothing for cold, wet, and windy conditions. Layer clothing to adjust to changing environmental temperatures. Wear a hat and gloves, in addition to underwear that will keep water away from the skin (polypropylene.)
- Take frequent short breaks in warm, dry shelters to allow the body to warm up.
- Perform work during the warmest part of the day.
- Avoid exhaustion or fatigue because energy is needed to keep muscles warm.
- Use the buddy system (work in pairs.)
- Drink warm, sweet beverages (sugar water, sports-type drinks.)
Avoid drinks with caffeine (coffee, tea, or hot chocolate) **or alcohol.**
- Eat warm, high-calorie foods like hot pasta dishes.

Workers are at increased risk when...

- They have predisposing health conditions such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and hypertension.
- They take certain medications. Check with your doctor, nurse, or pharmacy and ask if medicines you take affect you while working in cold environments.
- They are in poor physical condition, have a poor diet, or are older.

HYPOTHERMIA - (Medical Emergency)

What happens to the body:

Normal body temperature (98.6°F/37°C) drops to or below 95°F/35°C; fatigue or drowsiness; uncontrolled shivering; cool, bluish skin; slurred speech; clumsy movements; irritable, irrational, or confused behavior.

What to do: (land temperatures)

- Call for emergency help (i.e., ambulance or 911).
- Move the person to a warm, dry area. Don't leave the person alone.
- Remove wet clothing and replace with warm, dry clothing or wrap the person in blankets.
- Have the person drink warm, sweet drinks (sugar water or sports-type drinks) if he is alert. **Avoid drinks with caffeine** (coffee, tea, or hot chocolate) **or alcohol.**
- Have the person move his arms and legs to create muscle heat. If he is unable to do this, place warm bottles or hot packs in the armpits, groin, neck, and head areas. **Do not** rub the person's body or place him in a warm water bath. This may stop his heart.

What to do: (water temperatures)

- Call for emergency help (i.e., ambulance or 911). Body heat is lost up to 25 times faster in water.
- **Do not** remove any clothing. Button, buckle, zip, and tighten any collars, cuffs, shoes, and hoods because the layer of trapped water closest to the body provides a layer of insulation that slows the loss of heat. Keep the head out of the water and put on a hat or hood.
- Get out of the water as quickly as possible or climb on anything floating. **Do not** attempt to swim unless a floating object or another person can be reached because swimming or other physical activity uses body heat and reduces survival time by about 50 percent.
- If getting out of the water is not possible, wait quietly and conserve body heat by folding arms across the chest, keeping thighs together, bending knees, and crossing ankles. If another person is in the water, huddle together with chests held closely.

THE COLD STRESS EQUATION

LOW TEMPERATURE + WIND SPEED + WETNESS = INJURIES & ILLNESS

When the body is unable to warm itself, serious cold-related illnesses and injuries may occur, and permanent tissue damage and death may result. **Hypothermia** can occur when *land temperatures* are above freezing or *water temperatures* are below 98.6°F/37°C. Cold-related illnesses can slowly overcome a person who has been chilled by low temperatures, brisk winds, or wet clothing.

