



# Protecting Yourself from Cold Weather

Now that winter is here, we need to prepare for cold weather. Even if you don't work in a cold climate, it's helpful to know how to protect yourself. Extreme cold can cause many health problems, including hypothermia and frostbite. This training will outline ways to keep you safe.

## ***How to Protect Yourself***

To protect yourself from cold weather, remember to dress appropriately. Wear layers of clothing to keep you insulated. The inner layer should transfer moisture away from your skin. The middle layer should provide warmth and insulation. Finally, the outer layer should protect you from wind, rain and snow.

Another way to protect yourself is to avoid caffeine. Caffeine stimulates the heart and can cause it to circulate cold blood. Also, if possible, try to stay dry. Finally, while it may sound strange, keep yourself hydrated. Dry air in cold conditions can cause dehydration.

## ***What is Hypothermia?***

Hypothermia is a condition that occurs when your core body temperature is below 95 degrees. Mild hypothermia occurs when your core temperature is between 90 and 95 degrees. Severe hypothermia occurs when your core temperature is below 90 degrees.

Symptoms of mild hypothermia include:

- Uncontrollable shivering
- Loss of dexterity
- Pale and cool skin
- Incoherence

You can treat mild hypothermia by moving the person to a warm and dry environment.

- Give the victim extra clothes or blankets.
- Provide warm liquids (no caffeine or alcohol) and high-energy foods.
- Call a doctor as soon as possible.

Symptoms of severe hypothermia include:

- Slurred speech
- Confusion
- Shallow breathing
- Unusual behavior
- Irregular heartbeat

For severe hypothermia, call a doctor immediately. While you're waiting for help to arrive, you can do the following:

- Apply mild heat to the victim's head, neck, chest, and armpits.
- Try to keep the victim conscious.
- Try not to let the victim move.

Movement will circulate cold blood back to the heart. This can cause further damage.

***What is Frostbite?***

Frostbite occurs when you've been exposed to cold temperatures (usually below freezing) for a prolonged amount of time. Generally, your ears, nose, fingers, hands, and feet are affected. This is because your body reduces the blood flow to these parts in order to maintain its core temperature.

Frostbite makes skin look pale or blue. In addition, your skin will feel cold and numb, and can sometimes feel stiff or rubbery. Severe frostbite can cause blisters.

When treating frostbite, never rub any of the affected areas. Rubbing will actually increase tissue damage. Instead, do the following:

- Move the victim to a warm, dry place.
- Place the affected body parts in warm water (100 to 104 degrees) until they turn red – not when feeling returns.
- Call a doctor as soon as possible.

Cold temperatures can cause many problems, ranging from dehydration to frostbite and hypothermia. Remember to follow the guidelines you learned today so that you can enjoy a safe winter season. If you have any other questions, contact the Risk Manager at (702) 368-6793.