

FROSTBITE PREVENTION

Newer employees, PTF's and CCA's should be mindful of the danger signs of frostbite. Have the chemical warming packets in your pockets before leaving the station.

The following information is from the National Safety Council.

Prolonged exposure to low temperatures, wind and/or moisture can result in cold-related injury from frostbite and hypothermia. Here are some suggestions on how to keep warm and avoid frostbite and hypothermia.

Dress Properly

Wear several layers of clothing to insulate your body by trapping warm, dry air inside. Wool and polypropylene trap air and do not retain moisture. Choose a coat with a wind and waterproof outer layer.

The head and neck lose heat faster than any other part of the body. Your cheeks, ears and nose are the most prone to frostbite. Wear a hat, scarf and turtleneck sweater to protect these areas.

Danger Signs

The extent of frostbite is difficult to judge until hours after thawing. There are two classifications of frostbite:

- ***Superficial frostbite*** is characterized by white, waxy or grayish-yellow patches on the affected areas. The skin feels cold and numb. The skin surface feels stiff and underlying tissue feels soft when depressed.
- ***Deep frostbite*** is characterized by waxy and pale skin. The affected parts feel cold, hard, and cannot be depressed. Large blisters may appear after rewarming.

What to do

- Get the victim out of the cold and to a warm place immediately.
- Remove any constrictive clothing items and jewelry that could impair circulation.
- If you notice signs of frostbite, seek medical attention immediately.
- Place dry, sterile gauze between toes and fingers to absorb moisture and to keep them from sticking together.
- Slightly elevate the affected part to reduce pain and swelling.
- If you are more than one hour from a medical facility and only if refreezing can be prevented, then frostbite can be rewarmed by ***immersing the area in lukewarm, not hot water*** (100 to 105°F). If you do not have a thermometer, test the water first to see if it is warm. Rewarming usually takes 20 to 45 minutes or until tissues soften.

What not to do

- Do not use water hotter than 105°F.
- Do not use water colder than 100°F since it will not thaw frostbite quickly enough.
- Do not rub or massage the frostbitten area.
- Do not rub with ice or snow.
- Do not apply a heat source to frostbitten skin.

**Call your station supervisor to inform him/her of your condition.
This is a safety issue, and not negotiable.**