

# Protecting Yourself From the Cold

Cold temperatures and high wind cause heat to leave the body faster, putting workers at risk. Anyone working in the cold, inside or out, may be at risk.

## Common types of cold stress

### *Hypothermia*

- Normal body temperature (98.6°F) drops to 95°F or less.
- **Mild Symptoms:** alert but shivering.
- **Moderate to Severe Symptoms:** shivering stops; confusion; slurred speech; slower breathing and heart rate; loss of consciousness; death.

### *Frostbite*

- Body tissues freeze, e.g. hands and feet. Can occur at temperatures above freezing, due to wind chill. May result in amputation.
- **Symptoms:** numbness, reddened skin develops gray/white patches, feels firm/hard, and may blister.

### *Trench Foot (aka Immersion Foot)*

- Non-freezing injury to the foot, caused by lengthy exposure to wet and cold environment. Can occur at air temperatures as high as 60°F, if feet are constantly wet.
- **Symptoms:** redness, swelling numbness and blisters.

## Risk factors

- Dressing improperly
- Wet clothing/skin
- Exhaustion

## For prevention, you should:

- Have training on cold stress hazards and prevention.
- Provide engineering controls like radiant heaters.
- Gradually introduce workers to the cold; monitor workers; schedule breaks in warm areas.

## How to protect yourself and others

- Know the symptoms; monitor yourself and co-workers.
- Drink warm, sweetened fluids (no alcohol).
- Dress properly:
  - Layers of loose-fitting, insulating clothes
  - Insulated jacket, gloves, and a hat (waterproof, if necessary)
  - Insulated and waterproof boots

## What to do if suffering from cold stress

### *Hypothermia*

- Call 911
- Move worker to warm place, change to dry clothes and cover with blankets or garbage bags. Do **not** cover the face.
- If help is 30 minutes away, give warm, sweetened drinks and apply heat packs to armpits, sides of chest, neck, and groin.

### *Frostbite*

- Follow directions for hypothermia
- **Do Not** rub the frostbitten area.
- **Do Not** apply snow/water or break blisters
- **Do Not** try to rewarm the area unless directed by medical personnel

### *Trench Foot (aka Immersion Foot)*

- Remove wet shoes/socks; air dry in a warm area; keep feet elevated and avoid walking. Get medical attention

For more information and additional risk management and prevention tools, visit: [fwcruminsurance.com](http://fwcruminsurance.com)