

■ Working in a Cold Environment



WORKING IN A PLACE that is too cold can be more than uncomfortable. Working in extreme cold can make you sick.

There are two direct health problems that are caused by cold:

- Frostbite
- Hypothermia

Frostbite is when the skin and the underlying tissue is damaged by extreme cold. Hands, nose and feet are most likely to get frostbite. Diabetes and other circulatory illnesses can increase your risk of getting frostbite.

Symptoms of frostbite are skin that is hard and cold after being in the cold for too long. The area can be numb, but it also might have an aching pain. When the skin warms up and thaws, it becomes red and can tingle, burn or be very painful.

■ WHAT TO DO

If frostbite occurs, DO:

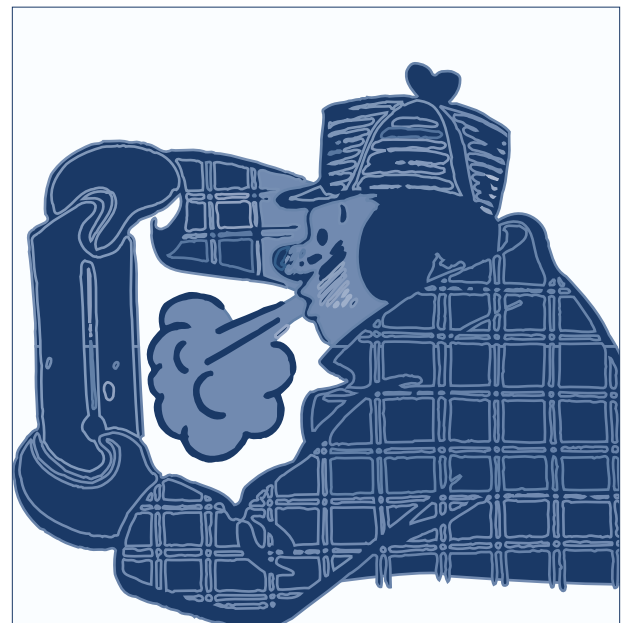
- Get the person to a warmer place. Remove wet clothing.
- Soak or apply warm cloths to the affected area in WARM (never HOT) water. Water temperature should be 104-108 degrees F. Severe burning pain and swelling may occur in the warming process. Warming is complete when the skin is soft and numbness goes away.
- Put gauze between frostbitten fingers or toes to keep them separate.
- Prevent refreezing of the area by wrapping the thawed areas and keeping the person warm. Refreezing can cause more serious damage.
- Replace lost fluids with warm, non-alcoholic and non-caffeinated drinks.

If Frostbite occurs, DO NOT:

- Do NOT allow the area to get refrozen. That

will make the damage worse.

- Do NOT use direct dry heat (like a radiator or hair dryer) to warm the frostbitten areas. This can burn the tissue more.
- Do NOT rub the frostbitten area.
- Do NOT touch blisters on frostbitten skin.



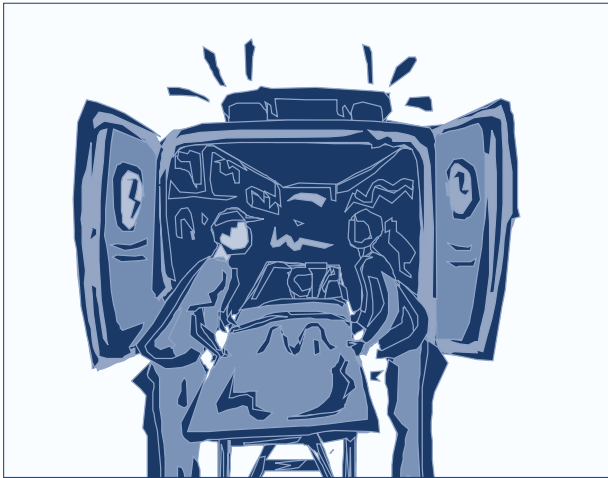
Hypothermia is a condition you get when your body temperature becomes dangerously low. Symptoms of hypothermia include:

- Drowsiness
- Weakness and loss of coordination
- Pale and cold skin
- Confusion
- Uncontrollable shivering (although at extremely low body temperatures, shivering may stop)
- Cardiac arrest, shock, and coma can set in without prompt treatment. Hypothermia can be fatal.

WHAT TO DO

If Hypothermia occurs:

- Call 911 if the person is confused or disoriented.
- Take the person inside and warm him or her with blankets. Cover the head and neck to help keep them warm.
- Remove any wet clothing.
- Apply warm cloths to the neck, chest and groin. If he or she is awake and can swallow, give him or her warm, non-caffeinated, non-alcoholic drinks.



If Hypothermia occurs, do NOT:

- Do NOT use direct heat (such as hot water or a heat lamp) to warm the person.
- Do NOT give him or her alcoholic drinks.

PREVENTION

- Take breaks in warm areas.
- Wear layered, vented clothing to keep cold out and warmth in. Gloves and footwear should be insulated.
- In windy areas, try to build barriers to block the wind.
- Drink warm beverages that do not have alcohol or caffeine.

There are no laws that protect workers from cold environments. Your contract may give you some protection. See Appendix C for contract language for your job title.

