

**Cold Related Illness** Toolbox Talks are intended to facilitate health and safety discussions. Find more Toolbox Talks on the Occupational Safety web page.

**Discussion Date:** 

## **General Information**

Some workers spend a lot of time outside, so knowing how to prevent cold-related health problems can keep you safe. Cold-related health problems, while potentially deadly, are preventable.



## Symptoms and Actions

- Hypothermia abnormally low body temperature (< 95° F).
  - Seek medical attention immediately!
  - Get the person to a warm room.
  - Remove any wet clothing.
- Frostbite Damage to extremities caused by freezing. Symptoms include: loss of feeling, pain, and skin appears waxy or discolored. Frostbite is most common on the fingers, toes, nose, ears, cheeks and chin.
  - Seek medical care.
  - Check for signs of hypothermia.
  - Get the person to a warm room.
  - Do not rub the affected skin.
  - o Put the affected skin in warm (not hot) water.
  - If warm water is not available, use body heat (arm pits).
  - Do not use heat generating devices that can burn the skin.

## **Preventive Measures**

- Check the temperature and limit your time outdoors in cold, wet or windy weather.
- Dress appropriately:
  - Several layers of loose, warm clothing
    - Wool, silk or synthetic (e.g. polypropylene) should be worn against the skin.
    - Followed by a bulky middle or insulating layer like synthetic fleece or wool.
    - Outer most layer should be wind and water resistant/proof.
  - Hat or headband that can fully cover the ears.
  - Mittens or gloves
  - Water-resistant and insulated boots with warm socks.
- Keep moving, which will help you stay warm.
- Learn to recognize signs and symptoms of frostbite and hypothermia.

Participants:			