



Working in the Cold



The weather is getting colder and it is important to know the risks and how to prevent frostbite or hypothermia when working in the cold.

Frostbite

- A more severe condition, where both the skin and the underlying tissue (fat, muscle, bone) are frozen.
- Skin appears white and waxy and is hard to the touch.
- No sensation - the area is numb.



Hypothermia

- Being cold over a prolonged period of time can cause a drop in body temperature (below the normal 37°C).
- Shivering, confusion and loss of muscular control (e.g., difficulty walking) can occur.
- Can progress to a life-threatening condition where shivering stops or the person loses consciousness.
- Cardiac arrest may occur.

What to do?

Frostbite

- Frostbite can be serious and can result in amputation, get medical help.
- Do not rub or massage the area
- Do not warm the area until you can ensure it will stay warm.
- Warm the area gradually - use body heat, or warm water (40 to 42°C).
- Avoid direct heat which can burn the skin.

Hypothermia

- Get medical attention immediately.
- Lay the person down and avoid rough handling, particularly if the person is unconscious.
- Get the person indoors.
- Gently remove wet clothing.
- Warm the person gradually and slowly, using available sources of heat.

How to Prevent Frostbite and Hypothermia

- Check the weather forecast and dress appropriately.
- Stay dry.
- Seek shelter.
- Keep active.

