



IMCOM Safety Gram



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What to do when it's C-C-Cold

For many people, working or playing in cold weather can be a positive experience. You may feel invigorated by the bracing air and feel like doing your work with more physical energy than usual. When it comes to leisure, cold weather offers many enjoyable activities whether it's skiing, skating, snowmobiling or ice fishing.

When you work or play outdoors or in unheated structures during the winter months you are at risk for serious health problems including trench foot, frostbite, and hypothermia. In extreme cases, including cold water immersion, exposure can lead to death. Some of the danger signs include uncontrolled shivering, slurred speech, clumsy movements, fatigue, and confused behavior.



Here are some cold weather tips that all need to be familiar with:

- ◆ Learn to recognize some of the environmental and workplace conditions that may be dangerous. For example, it needn't be bone chillingly cold, with a howling wind, in order for you to be at risk for developing hypothermia. It can happen in above-freezing temperatures.
- ◆ Learn the signs and symptoms of cold-induced illnesses and injuries and what to do to help others.
- ◆ Wear proper clothing for cold, wet, and windy conditions, including layers that can be adjusted to changing conditions. Remember sweating can quickly make a bad situation worse so be aware of your body temperature and add or remove layers as needed. If you are playing a sport or run the risk of sweating, you should bring additional layers of clothing so you can change into layers if required.
- ◆ When in extreme conditions, take frequent short breaks in a warm dry shelter to allow yourself to warm up.
- ◆ Try to schedule outside work or play for the warmest part of the day.
- ◆ Avoid exhaustion or fatigue because energy is needed to keep muscles warm.
- ◆ Use the buddy system - work in pairs so that others can recognize danger signs.
- ◆ Try to keep moving while in the cold; don't be still. This helps to keep your body temperature up and circulation moving. If you think you are experiencing symptoms of hypothermia or frostbite, get to a shelter right away and seek medical help.
- ◆ In addition to dressing properly for cold conditions, it's important to eat regularly when you are out in the cold, especially foods high in carbohydrates and fats such as hot pasta dishes. Your body requires an enormous number of calories to shiver and keep warm.
- ◆ Drink warm, sweet beverages (sugar water, sports-type drinks) and avoid drinks with caffeine (coffee, tea, sodas or hot chocolate) and avoid alcohol.
- ◆ Remember, you can face increased risks when you take certain medications, are in poor physical condition, or suffer from illnesses such as diabetes, hypertension, or cardiovascular disease.



Remember: working or playing in cold weather can be a positive experience if you dress warmly and use common sense about protecting yourself.