



NOAA's National Weather Service



Our Employees' Safety and Environmental Newsletter for Work and Home



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Winter Weather Safety



The winter brings cold, snow and ice across many areas of our country. Hazardous winter weather brings many safety issues to our employees during the performance of their jobs and home life. This issue of the NWS quarterly newsletter is devoted entirely to winter weather, both from a safety and environmental perspective.

Extreme Cold Temperatures

When the body is unable to warm itself, cold-related illnesses and injuries may occur, causing permanent tissue damage or even death. Cold related conditions can slowly overcome a person who has been chilled by low temperatures, brisk winds, or wet clothing.

The two most common cold-related illnesses are frostbite and hypothermia. See page 2 for more on these serious conditions.



The NWS ES&H Team is very pleased to announce the appointment of Stephen R. D'Antoni as the new Environmental, Safety & Occupational Health Professional for the FMB / OPS-15. Steve comes to us from the Architect of the Capitol organization where he served as the ES&H professional since September 2003.

Steve holds a B.Sc. degree in Aeronautics, 1992, and a M.Sc. degree in Industrial Engineering, 2002. He is OSHA authorized construction & general industry outreach trainer, Certified US Army Accident Investigation Board President, and CPR and AED Certified.

Please help extend a warm welcome to Steve.

Extreme Cold Temperatures

Frostbite:

- ◆ Causes freezing in deep layers of skin and tissue.
- ◆ Causes pale, waxy-white skin color.
- ◆ Makes the skin hard and numb.
- ◆ Usually affects fingers, hands, toes, feet, ears, and/or nose.

Hypothermia:

- ◆ Occurs when the body temperature drops below 95°F.
- ◆ Causes uncontrolled shivering, fatigue, or drowsiness.
- ◆ Causes the skin to become bluish and cool.
- ◆ Can cause slurred speech, clumsy movements, irritable, irrational, or confused behavior.

To treat frostbite and other cold related illnesses

- ◆ Move the person to a warm, dry area. Do not leave the person alone.
- ◆ Remove wet or tight clothes that may cut off blood flow to the affected area. Replace with warm, dry-clothing or wrap in blankets.
- ◆ Do not rub the affected area if frostbitten. This can cause damage to the skin and tissue.
- ◆ If frostbitten, place the affected area in lukewarm water (105°F) and monitor the temperature to slowly warm the tissue. Warming takes from 25 to 40 minutes.
- ◆ When normal feeling, movement, and skin color returns, dry and wrap the affected area. Seek medical attention.
- ◆ Have the person drink warm, sweet beverages, such as sugar water, sports drinks, and so on. Avoid drinks with caffeine in them.
- ◆ Eat warm, high-calorie foods such as pasta dishes.

To prevent frostbite and other cold related illnesses

- ◆ Teach employees to recognize the signs and symptoms of cold-induced illnesses.
- ◆ Have employees use the buddy system to monitor each other.
- ◆ Allow employees to take frequent short breaks in warming shelters or out of the wind.
- ◆ Work in the warmest part of the day.



Frostbite Hands
Source: NIH

Article Source: OSHA

Do's And Don'ts Concerning First Aid For Frost Bite

- ⇒ Do get the person into a warm room as soon as possible and call for medical assistance. You also can give the person warm drinks, such as broth or tea.
- ⇒ Do rest the injured areas (avoid walking) and elevate them slightly.
- ⇒ Do take off any wet or restrictive clothing.
- ⇒ Do warm the area by immersing it in warm (not hot) water for at least 30 to 45 minutes, or until the affected part feels warm and sensation returns. During warming, the patient may complain of severe pain and the injured area may swell and change color.
- ⇒ Do not do anything that will further injure the tissue. Leave blisters intact, and cover them with sterile, clean cloths.
- ⇒ Do not rub the area with your hands, snow or anything else.

Source: Stevens Publishing Corporation

Working In Cold Environments

Prolonged exposure to freezing or cold temperatures may cause serious health problems such as trench foot, frostbite and hypothermia. In extreme cases, including cold water immersion, exposure can lead to death. Danger signs include uncontrolled shivering, slurred speech, clumsy movements, fatigue and confused behavior. If these signs are observed, call for emergency help.

OSHA's Cold Stress Card provides a reference guide and recommendations to combat and prevent many illnesses and injuries. Available in English and Spanish, this laminated fold-up card is free to employers, workers and the public.

Remember, workers face increased risks when they take certain medications, are in poor physical condition or suffer from illnesses such as diabetes, hypertension or cardiovascular disease. For free copies of OSHA's Cold Stress Card in [English](#) or [Spanish](#), go to OSHA's website, www.osha.gov, or call 1(800) 321-OSHA.

How to Protect Workers



- ◆ Recognize the environmental and workplace conditions that may be dangerous.
- ◆ Learn the signs and symptoms of cold-induced illnesses and injuries and what to do to help workers.
- ◆ Train workers about cold-induced illnesses and injuries.
- ◆ Encourage workers to wear proper clothing for cold, wet and windy conditions, including layers that can be adjusted to changing conditions.
- ◆ Be sure workers in extreme conditions take a frequent short break in warm dry shelters to allow their bodies to warm up.
- ◆ Try to schedule work 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 one worker can recognize danger signs.
- ◆ Drink warm, sweet beverages (sugar water, sports-type drinks) and avoid drinks with caffeine (coffee, tea, sodas or hot chocolate) or alcohol.
- ◆ Eat warm, high-calorie foods such as hot pasta dishes

Avoiding Slips, Trips, and Falls in Winter

With winter weather across the country we need to practice safety precautions relating to slips, trips, and falls. The National Safety Council has reports that falls account for approximately 16.9% of all workplace accidents that result in injuries or illness that require time away from work. Nearly 25% of all injuries that happen in the home are a result of falls.

We can help eliminate slips, trips, and falls if we identify and remove hazards associated with these types of accidents. We can help reduce accidents by wearing appropriate footwear, promptly cleaning up spills, keeping walkways clear and free of clutter, never replacing ladders with chairs or other items, only carry loads you can safely handle, and make sure you have adequate lighting.



During inclement winter weather, walking safely on icy surfaces can pose a real challenge. We can reduce the risk of slips in icy conditions by wearing appropriate footwear, avoiding routes that have not been cleared or appear to be glazed over, and by refraining from carrying large objects that may obstruct your view and make you lose your balance. Always take your time and be safe.

Environmental Concerns—Protecting The World We Live In

Reducing Waste During The Winter

- Winterize your vehicle by checking your air filter and fluid levels, checking tires for tread wear and proper inflation, and checking the condition of your windshield wipers.
- If you have a wood-burning fireplace, save your ashes in a tin instead of throwing them away. Cold wood ashes can be mixed in your compost heap to create valuable soil amendment that provide nutrients to your garden.
- Use electric snow removal products rather than gasoline-powered ones. While electric products consume energy, they do not emit greenhouse gases.
- Before leaving for vacation, turn down your thermostat (or use a programmable one) so that you don't waste natural resources by generating un-needed heat.
- Close the recycling loop. Many articles of clothing, such as jackets, scarves, gloves and boots are now made from recyclable materials. Did you know that most fleece products are made from recycled soda bottles.
- Winter causes power outages. Prevent waste by keeping rechargeable batteries rather than disposable ones stored throughout your house with your flashlights.



More information: <http://www.epa.gov/naturalevents/snow-ice.html>

January Is National Radon Action Month

Did you know?

- * **Radon is a cancer-causing, radioactive gas.**
- * **Radon can be found all over the United States**
- * **You should test for radon.**
- * **You can fix the problem**
- * **New homes and offices can be built with radon-resistant features.**

Indoor radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the United States and the leading cause among non-smokers. Protect your workplace and home. Radon has created difficulties for at least one NWS facility.

If you have further questions about radon call your state radon contact (<http://www.epa.gov/iaq/wherelyoulive.html> - just click on your state).

Prevent Damage From Frozen Pipes

An average of a quarter of a million American families have one or more rooms in their homes ruined each winter by water pipes freezing and breaking.

When the outside temperature drops below 20 degrees Fahrenheit, water pipes in homes with little or no insulation are likely to freeze and break.

Homeowners can avoid frozen pipes by:

- * Having adequate insulation where pipes run along outside walls
- * Open cabinet doors to allow heat to get to piping under sinks and vanities near exterior walls
- * Run a small trickle of water at vulnerable cold and hot faucets.

Source: Stevens Publishing

REMEMBER, SAFETY FIRST!



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