

SAFETY TALK

Environmental Health and Safety Newsletter

February 2023

Avoid Frostbite and Hypothermia

Cold weather can be dangerous for anyone who spends time outdoors for either work or pleasure. Be mindful of the risks. Excessive exposure to low temperatures, wind or moisture can cause two dangerous conditions: frostbite and hypothermia.

Before venturing outside in winter, be sure to:

- Check the temperature and limit your time outdoors if it's very cold, wet or windy.
- Bundle up in several layers of loose clothing
- Wear mittens rather than gloves
- Cover your head and ears with a warm hat
- Wear socks that will keep your feet warm and dry

Frostbite

Even skin that is protected can be subject to frostbite. It's the most common injury resulting from exposure to severe cold, and it usually occurs on fingers, toes, nose, ears, cheeks and chin. If caught early, it is possible to prevent permanent damage. If not, frostbite can cause tissue death and lead to amputation.

If you suspect frostbite:

- Move the victim out of the cold and into a warm place
- Remove wet clothing and constricting items
- Protect between fingers and toes with dry gauze
- Seek medical attention as soon as possible
- Do not use chemical warmers directly on frostbitten tissue
- Protect and elevate the frostbitten area

Hypothermia

Hypothermia occurs when the body's core temperature drops below 95 degrees. Severe shivering, one of the first signs of hypothermia, is beneficial in keeping the body warm. But as hypothermia progresses, shivering gives way to drowsiness or exhaustion, confusion, shallow breathing, irregular heartbeat, slurred speech, loss of coordination and, eventually, unconsciousness and death.

If you encounter someone suffering from hypothermia:

- Check responsiveness and breathing, and call 911; except in mild cases, the victim needs immediate medical care
- Provide CPR if unresponsive and not breathing normally
- Quickly move the victim out of the cold
- Remove wet clothing.
- Warm the victim with blankets or warm clothing
- · Do not rub or massage the victim's skin
- Be very gentle when handling the victim
- Give warm (not hot) drinks to an alert victim who can easily swallow, but do not give alcohol or caffeine

Date:	
Department:	
Supervisor (please print):	
Supervisor Signature:	
Employee Participants: **Please Print Clearly**	Signature

Environmental Health and Safety

110 Suffolk Hall Stony Brook, NY 11794 Main Office: 632-6410 Fax: 632-9683

Supervisor must perform safety talk for the noted month and ensure all employees sign off on this form. Completed form is to be kept on file by department.