

Army *Safety* Gram

Leading on the Edge for Safety Excellence

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Working in Cold Weather

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.

Unfortunately, all the enjoyable aspects of working or playing out in cold weather can turn negative if you are not dressed warmly or dryly enough.

Over exposure to cold and dampness can cause your body temperature to lower. This condition is called hypothermia. You may have it when you start to shiver and experience chills, or find yourself unable to think or speak clearly. You may lose your coordination and quite possibly your consciousness.

You could also get frostbite which is when your body tissue freezes. Frostbite happens most frequently to your extremities like your feet and toes, fingers, face and nose. Symptoms include numbness and a white and waxy appearance to your skin.



There are many things you can do to dress properly for the cold:

- ♦ Dress in layers so you can remove or put on clothing according to the temperature.
- ♦ Always wear a warm hat on your head—this is the part of the body that loses heat the fastest. There are also liners you can wear to keep your head warm under a hard hat or other kinds of protective head gear. Consider wearing a knitted face mask to deflect cold and wind chill.
- ♦ Wear waterproof, insulated boots with several layers of socks, preferably cotton ones under wool. They enable your feet to breathe. When your socks or boot liners become wet, remove and replace them.
- ♦ Always wear warm gloves or mitts. Some gloves have liners which, if wet, should be removed and replaced.

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. Your body requires an enormous number of calories to shiver and keep warm. Avoid alcohol, contrary to the popular image of the St. Bernard dog delivering brandy to warm a frozen victim.

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.

When you work or play in the cold, it is a good idea to have a companion. What if you were to become injured or over-exposed to the cold and couldn't seek help yourself?

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

