**Why Talk About**

**Cold Temperatures?**

Each year, dozens of Americans die due to exposure to cold. Add to that number, vehicle accidents and fatalities, fires due to dangerous use of heaters and other winter weather fatalities and you have a significant threat.

Threats, such as hypothermia and frostbite, can lead to loss of fingers and toes or cause permanent kidney, pancreas and liver injury and even death. You must prepare properly to avoid these extreme dangers. You also need to know what to do if you see symptoms of these threats.

**Frostbite**

Frostbite is damage to body tissue caused by extreme cold. A wind chill of -20° Fahrenheit (F) will cause frostbite in just 30 minutes. Frostbite causes a loss of feeling and a white or pale appearance in extremities, such as fingers, toes, ear lobes or the tip of the nose. If symptoms are detected, get medical help immediately! If you must wait for help, slowly re-warm affected areas. A worker suffering frostbite should be taken to a warm area, where wet or tight clothing should be removed. Medical attention must be sought as soon as possible. Never rub or apply heat to the affected area.

**Hypothermia**

Hypothermia is a condition brought on when the body temperature drops to less than 95°F. It can kill. For those who survive, there are likely to be lasting kidney, liver and pancreas problems. Warning signs include uncontrollable shivering, memory loss, disorientation, incoherence, slurred speech, drowsiness and apparent exhaustion. Take the person’s temperature. If the person is also showing signs of hypothermia, warm the body core before the extremities. If below 95°F, seek medical care immediately!

**Prevention**

Your best defense against frostbite and hypothermia is to dress warmly, in layers, so clothing can be removed or added as needed. Remember, too much clothing can lead to sweating, which can set the stage for hypothermia.

Bring along extra clothing to change into if there's any possibility that you will get wet while working. Since much heat loss occurs from the head area, you should wear a hat.

Winter footwear is essential for keeping the feet warm and dry.

Now that you know the symptoms of frostbite and hypothermia, remember to watch out for them in yourself and in your co-workers.



