

# SAFETY MOMENT

It's about the team, your safety matters.

QIS Safety, December 21, 2020

The seasons have changed and the pandemic is raging. Staying on top of the latest updates from the operator, from QIS, local authorities, the CDC, ensuring you're versed in the most important social distancing and quarantine guidelines, following daily contractor updates (and learning where toilet paper is still available) are, of course, important. But what happens when your focus on the pandemic becomes overwhelming and you can't concentrate on work anymore? Changing your focus to work issues can be normalizing and can provide fulfillment in tumultuous times. Nothing is more important than your safety. Today's topic:



hat constitutes extreme cold and its effects can vary across different areas of the country. In regions that are not used to winter weather, near freezing temperatures are considered "extreme cold." A cold environment forces the body to work harder to maintain its temperature. Whenever temperatures drop below normal and wind speed increases, heat leaves your body more rapidly.

old stress occurs by driving down the skin temperature and eventually the internal body temperature (core temperature). This may lead to serious health problems, including tissue damage and possibly death. Some of the risk factors that contribute to cold stress are:

- Wetness/dampness
- Dressing improperly
- Exhaustion
- Predisposing health conditions such as hypertension, hypothyroidism, and diabetes
- Poor physical conditioning

### The body's reaction to cold.

On a cold environment, most of the body's energy is used to keep the internal core temperature warm. Over time, the body will begin to shift blood flow from the extremities (hands, feet, arms, and legs) and outer skin to the core (chest and abdomen). This shift allows the exposed skin and the extremities to cool rapidly, increasing the risk of cold stress illnesses and injuries.

### Cold stress dangers.

than it can be replaced and the normal body temperature (98.6°F) drops to less than 95°F. Hypothermia occurs most often at very cold temperatures. It can also occur at temperatures above 40°F if a person becomes chilled from rain, sweat, or submersion in cold water. Confusion and fatigue can set in, hampering a person's ability to understand what's happening and make intelligent choices to get to safety. In severe hypothermia, a person may be unconscious without obvious signs of breathing or a pulse

Trostbite is an injury to the body that is caused by the freezing of skin and underlying tissues. The lower the temperature, the more quickly frostbite will occur. It's the most common injury resulting from exposure to severe cold, and it usually occurs on fingers, toes, nose, ears, cheeks and chin. Amputation may be required in severe cases.

rench Foot is caused by prolonged exposure to wet and cold temperatures. It can occur at temperatures as high as 60°F if the feet are constantly wet. Non-freezing injury occurs because wet feet lose heat 25-times faster than dry feet. To prevent heat loss, the body constricts the blood vessels to shut down circulation in the feet. The skin tissue begins to die because of a lack of oxygen and nutrients, and the buildup of toxic products.



## HYPOTHERMIA

### Indications of hypothermia include:

- shivering
- numbness
- glassy stare
- apathy
- weakness
- impaired judgment
- loss of consciousness.

### What to do for hypothermia:

- CALL 911 or the local emergency number.
- Gently move the person to a warm place.
- Monitor breathing and circulation.
- Give rescue breathing and CPR if needed.
- Remove any wet clothing and dry the person.
- Warm the person slowly by wrapping in blankets or by putting dry clothing on the person. Hot water bottles and chemical hot packs may be used when first wrapped in a towel or blanket before applying. Do not warm the person too quickly, such as by immersing him or her in warm water. Rapid warming may cause dangerous heart arrhythmias. Warm the core first (trunk, abdomen), not the extremities (hands, feet). This is important to mention because most people will try to warm hands and feet first and that can cause shock.

## FRASTBITE

### Signs of frostbite include:

- lack of feeling in the affected area;
- skin that appears waxy, is cold to the touch, or is discolored (flushed, white or gray, yellow or blue).

#### What to do for frostbite:

- Move the person to a warm place.
- Handle the area gently; never rub the affected area.
- Warm gently by soaking the affected area in warm water (100–105 degrees F) until it appears red and feels warm.
- Loosely bandage the area with dry, sterile dressings.
- If the person's fingers or toes are frostbitten, place dry, sterile gauze between them to keep them separated.
- Avoid breaking any blisters.
- Do not allow the affected area to refreeze.
- Seek professional medical care ASAP.



# Signs of trench foot, also called immersion foot syndrome:

- blisters
- blotchy skin
- redness
- · skin tissue that dies and falls off

#### First Aid for trench foot:

- treat similar to frostbite
- clean the affected area immediately
- avoid wearing wet or unclean socks
- keep feet dry at all times
- use heat packs for up to 5 minutes





Everyone needs a good weather app on their mobile device. Take a look at **The Weather Channel** from IBM at your app store, IOS or Android.



Take a look at a good First Aid app from the **American Red Cross** for IOS or Android. Handy to have in an emergency like Frostbite.