

# EHS Daily Advisor

# COLD STRESS

## SYMPTOMS, FIRST AID, & PREVENTION



### WHAT IS COLD STRESS?

COLD STRESS OCCURS WHEN THE COLD WEATHER CONDITIONS DRIVE DOWN SKIN TEMPERATURE, AND EVENTUALLY THE INTERNAL BODY TEMPERATURE. IT CAN AFFECT ANY EMPLOYEE WHO WORKS IN COLD AIR TEMPERATURES, INCLUDING OUTDOOR WORKERS AND FIRST RESPONDERS.

### RISK FACTORS

- ▶ WETNESS AND DAMPNES
- ▶ DRESSING IMPROPERLY
- ▶ EXHAUSTION
- ▶ PREDISPOSING HEALTH CONDITIONS SUCH AS HYPERTENSION, HYPOTHYROIDISM, AND DIABETES
- ▶ POOR PHYSICAL CONDITIONING

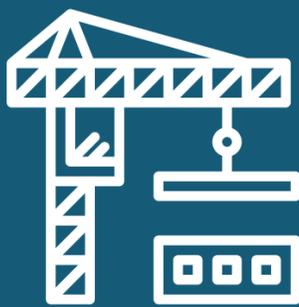


### TRENCH FOOT

A NON-FREEZING INJURY OF THE FEET CAUSED BY PROLONGED EXPOSURE TO WET AND COLD CONDITIONS. THE SYMPTOMS INCLUDE REDDENING SKIN, TINGLING, PAIN, SWELLING, LEG CRAMPS, NUMBNESS, AND BLISTERS.

### FROSTBITE

THE FREEZING OF THE SKIN AND TISSUES THAT CAN CAUSE REDDENED SKIN TO DEVELOP GRAY OR WHITE PATCHES IN THE FINGERS, TOES, NOSE, OR EARLOBES, ALONG WITH TINGLING, ACHING, A LOSS OF FEELING, AND BLISTERS.



### HYPOTHERMIA

A CONDITION MARKED BY UNCONTROLLABLE SHIVERING WHERE THE INTERNAL BODY TEMPERATURE DROPS BELOW 95°F, THAT MAY CAUSE A LOSS OF COORDINATION, CONFUSION, SLURRED SPEECH, A SLOWED HEART RATE, UNCONSCIOUSNESS, AND POSSIBLY DEATH.

### FIRST AID

USE OSHA'S [RECOMMENDED METHODS](#) OF FIRST AID. MOVE THE WORKER TO A DRY, WARM AREA, REMOVE ANY WET OR DAMP CLOTHING TO REPLACE IT WITH DRY CLOTHING, AND SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION FOR REWARMING, AND PROVIDE BASIC LIFE SUPPORT WHEN NECESSARY. CALL 911 IN AN EMERGENCY.



### PREVENTION

TRAIN WORKERS TO RECOGNIZE FACTORS THAT CAN LEAD TO COLD STRESS, SYMPTOMS, PREVENTION METHODS, AND HOW TO ADMINISTER HELP AND FIRST AID. EMPLOYEES SHOULD WORK IN PAIRS AND BE GIVEN WARM, SWEET, NON-ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES AND ENGINEERING CONTROLS SUCH AS RADIANT HEATERS. TEACH WORKERS TO SELECT PROPER CLOTHING FOR WET, DAMP, AND WINDY CONDITIONS. MONITOR WORKERS' PHYSICAL CONDITIONS, SCHEDULE FREQUENT BREAKS IN WARM, DRY AREAS, AND SCHEDULE WORK FOR THE WARMEST PART OF THE DAY. TAKE WIND CHILL INTO ACCOUNT AS WELL.