

# How To Treat Cold-Related Injuries

**Editor's note:** Our Tailgate Training Tip Sheets are available in Spanish at [www.gemplers.com](http://www.gemplers.com).

## KEY POINTS:

- Working outdoors in cold weather can result in serious injury.
- If you are frostbitten, you may not know it since the frostbitten area will become numb.
- Hypothermia is a life-threatening condition that requires immediate medical attention.

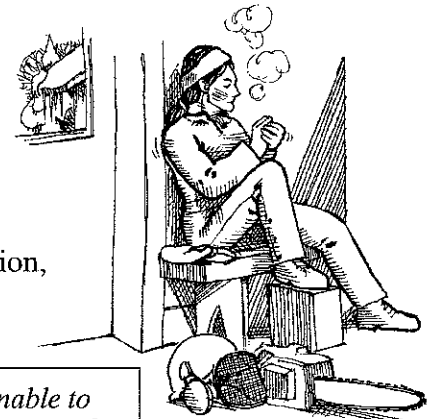
**Note to trainer:** Follow this script or use it to help guide you through a 10- to 15-minute tailgate training session for your agricultural workers. You may photocopy this sheet for your employees' personal use. However, it may not be published or sold.

Also see Tailgate Training Tip Sheet No. 49, **Working Outdoors In Cold Weather.**



## Cold weather can be fatal

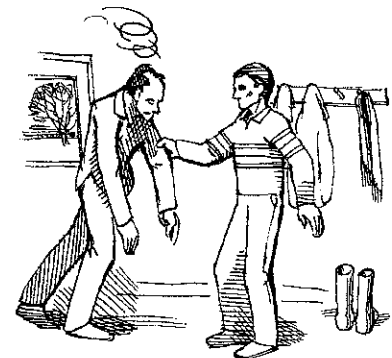
- Working outdoors in the cold can result in serious injury – especially if you're outdoors for long periods of time.
- Your risk of injury varies, depending on such factors as the temperature, wind speed, your length of time outdoors, your age, physical condition, and whether your clothing is wet or dry.
- The effects of cold weather may include shivering, loss of coordination, confusion, mild frostbite, severe frostbite, or even hypothermia – a progressive loss of body heat that can result in death.



**Warning:** Immediately take a break and seek warm shelter if you are unable to stop shivering, notice a stinging sensation or numbness, or become disoriented.

## Recognizing cold-related injuries

- Frostbite, or the freezing of body tissue exposed to the cold, is a common cold-related injury.
- Frostbite can be either mild or severe. Severe frostbite can result in the loss of such body parts as fingers, toes, hands, arms, feet or legs.
- Since frostbite has a numbing effect, you may not be aware you are frostbitten. Warning signs may include a stinging or aching feeling, followed by numbness; skin that feels waxy and cold; and skin that turns red, then gray, white, yellow or blue.
- Hypothermia occurs when your body loses heat faster than it can produce it. Heat loss occurs more rapidly when you are wet.
- Warning signs of hypothermia include increased shivering, slurred speech, impaired judgment, and poor muscle coordination.



Among the warning signs of hypothermia is poor muscle coordination.

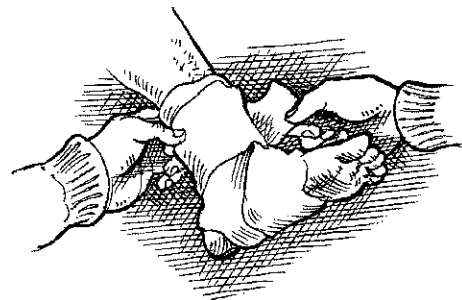
(Continued on back)

See our [full line of safety supplies](#), including respirators, eye and ear protection, coveralls, first aid and more.

# How To Treat Cold-Related Injuries

## How to treat frostbite

1. Move the person to a warm place and call for professional emergency medical help. Don't let the person walk if his or her feet are frostbitten.  
*Note to trainer: Tell trainees how to contact your local emergency medical services. If you have the emergency 911 number in your area, be sure it's posted at each telephone.*
2. Handle the frostbitten area gently; never rub it.
3. Loosely bandage the frostbitten area. Make sure the bandage is clean and dry.  
*Note to trainer: Be sure trainees know where your first aid kits are located.*
4. Avoid breaking any blisters.
5. Wait for professional emergency medical help to arrive.  
Do not try to rewarm the frostbitten area.

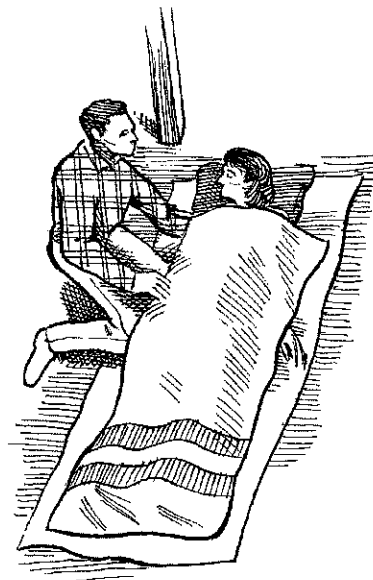


**Loosely cover the frostbitten area to protect it from further injury.**

## How to treat hypothermia

- Hypothermia is a life-threatening condition. Follow these steps if you suspect a co-worker has hypothermia:
  1. Gently move the person to a warm place and immediately call for professional emergency medical help.
  2. Remove the person's wet clothing.
  3. Slowly warm the person by wrapping him or her in blankets or putting on dry clothing. Don't immerse the person in water – warming will occur too quickly.
  4. If the person is conscious, offer a warm, non-alcoholic drink.
  5. Administer CPR if the person isn't breathing and you know how to perform CPR.

**Warning:** Severe hypothermia can result in death. Immediately seek professional emergency medical help if a co-worker exhibits any signs of hypothermia.



**Wrapping blankets around a person showing signs of hypothermia will help in the warming process.**

## Are there any questions?

*Note to trainer: Take time to answer trainees' questions. Then review the Cold-Related Injury Do's and Don'ts.*

### COLD-RELATED INJURY DO'S AND DON'TS

**DO:**

- Seek immediate shelter in a warm place if you can't stop shivering, notice numbness, or become disoriented.
- Handle any frostbitten area gently. Don't rub it.
- Contact your local emergency medical services for help with frostbite or hypothermia.

**DON'T:**

- Wear wet clothing outdoors in the cold.
- Place a person who is frostbitten next to a stove or fire.
- Ever rewarm frozen tissue. Seek emergency medical help immediately for any frozen tissue.

See our [full line of safety supplies](#), including respirators, eye and ear protection, coveralls, first aid and more.