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 **Winter Weather Safety**

Workers who are exposed to extreme cold may be at risk of cold stress. Hypothermia, frostbite, trench foot and chilblain are all examples of illnesses that can be caused by extremely cold or wet weather whenever temperatures drop. These weather-related conditions may lead to serious health problems. NIOSH offers the following tips for dealing with cold stress-related illnesses.

A victim of hypothermia, a condition in which the body uses up its stored energy and can no longer produce heat, may exhibit shivering, confusion and blue skin. If you suspect a co-worker is suffering from hypothermia:

* Request immediate medical assistance.
* Move the victim into a warm room or shelter.
* Remove wet clothing.
* If conscious, warm beverages may help increase the body temperature.
* Once the victim’s temperature has increased, keep the person dry and wrapped in a warm blanket, including the head and neck.

If you have frostbite, indicated by tingling or stinging hands; numbness; or bluish or pale, waxy skin:

* Get into a warm room as soon as possible.
* Unless necessary, do not walk on frostbitten feet or toes.
* Immerse the affected area in warm (not hot) water, or warm the affected area using body heat. Do not use a heating pad, fireplace or radiator for warming.
* Do not massage the frostbitten area – this may cause more damage.

General tips to protect yourself from the cold while working include:

* Wear several layers of loose clothing for insulation.
* Tight clothing reduces blood circulation to the extremities. Be aware that certain clothing may restrict movement, which can result in a hazardous situation.
* Protect the ears, face, hands, and feet in extremely cold or wet weather.
* Boots should be waterproof and insulated.
* Include chemical hot packs in your first aid kit.
* Avoid touching cold metal surfaces with bare skin.