

MAFES Dawg Tracks



November 3, 2008 Safety Tips: Cold Weather Precautions



Cold weather in other parts of our good 'ole country is more severe than what we normally face in Mississippi. None the less, we need to watch ourselves and take care in the few winter months that we have.

Cold exposure can lead to serious illness, even here where we have rare sub-zero days or nights. It is most important that we maintain an awareness of the temperature and what to do for protection. We can get a cold exposure even though we might not be in freezing temperatures. Wind, humidity, and moisture remove body heat, which can eventually lead to hypothermia. The cold primarily affects the extremities. Our hands and feet are further from the body core and have less blood flow. Common sense tells us that we can handle cold weather better than hot weather by adding more layers of clothes. Personally, I prefer the hot weather.

COLD EXPOSURE PREVENTION:

- Wear several layers of loose clothing. The layers furnish us with layers of insulation. If we have too many layers, you can always shed one.
- Tight clothing reduces blood circulation. Warm blood needs to be circulated to the extremities. When choosing clothing, be aware that some clothing can restrict movement, which could possible put one in a hazardous situation.
- Boots should be waterproof and insulated.
- By wearing a hat, you will keep your whole body warmer. Heat escapes your body without a "lid on the noggin." I have always heard that you can lose as much as 10% of your body heat without a cap or hat.
- Be sure to keep your face, feet, hands and ears protected in the cold weather.
- In extremely cold temperatures, limit your time outside. Periodically get in to a warm place and "thaw" yourself for a while.
- This isn't so much typical in the deep South, but it won't hurt to carry extra socks, maybe extra clothes and a hat to change, if you should get caught in the rain during cold weather.
- When you are working around metal, avoid touching it with your naked skin.

COLD WEATHER INJURIES:

- **Frostnip** - This is the freezing of the top layers of skin tissue and is normally reversible. Again, this is uncommon for our part of the country, but extended exposure can cause this.

Treatment:

- ~Rewarm the injured area by blowing warm air on it or placing it close to a warm part of the body.
- ~Refrain from rubbing this area as it can damage the effected tissue.

- **Frostbite** - This is when the tissue and/or a body part actually freezes. With the real frostbite, you can lose skin, destroy tissues or maybe lose an appendage, like a finger, foot, or toe. A superficial frostbite results in the possibility of the loss of skin and a deep frostbite can result in the freezing of muscle and bone.

Symptoms include-

- ~Skin turns white and has a "wood" feeling.
- ~Numbness, possibly anesthesia.

Treatment-

- ~Move the victim to a warm place. Put the affected body parts in warm water (105-110 degrees) until the skin returns to a blush color. Water should not be any hotter than we mentioned above or additional damage could result.

- **Hypothermia-** This is the cooling of the body. When the body temperature gets down below 98.7 degrees, serious problems can exist.

Symptoms include-

- ~Uncontrollable shivering.
- ~Numbness of hands, but still able to walk and talk.
- ~Poor muscle coordination.
- ~Pulse and respiration rates decrease.

Treatment-

- ~Encourage physical activity to generate body heat.
- ~Get the victim to warm areas and remove all wet clothing.
- ~Slowly rewarm the body with hot packs wrapped in towels to all body parts to restore source of body heat.
- ~Give the victim hot caffeine-free and alcohol-free drinks.

- **Severe Hypothermia-**

- ~Treat the person as a medical emergency.
- ~Apply hot packs to the neck, armpits, side, chest and groin to apply heat. Warm the victim's lungs by mouth-to-mouth breathing.
- ~ Do not rub or manipulate the extremities.
- ~Remove wet clothing and place the victim in a sleeping bag, if there is one available.
- ~If the victim stops shivering, this means that they have lost the ability to generate their own heat and another person needs to lay close to them to help generate heat for the victim.

**GOOD HABITS WILL NORMALLY
KEEP YOU OUT
OF BAD TROUBLE!!**