

# MAFES Dawg Tracks



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Safety Tips: Preventing Cold Stress Injuries



**Winter is here!** The time is right for us to be conscious of the signs, symptoms and treatment of cold weather hazards. When we think of cold weather, hypothermia is the first thing that comes to mind and for residents in the north part of Mississippi this is probably present in their minds. Hypothermia can happen anytime of the year and not necessarily in the cold, even though we usually associate it with cold weather. It can happen anytime that we are exposed to the cold and our body heat is lost faster than we can generate more heat.

## SIGNS & SYMPTOMS OF HYPOTHERMIA:

- Confusion and forgetfulness
- Shallow, very slow breathing
- Slurred speech
- Sluggishness
- Cold, stiff muscles
- Trembling or shivering

## CAUSES OF HYPOTHERMIA:

- Consumption of alcohol beverages
- Elderly persons
- Infants
- Persons who suffer from disabling or weakening conditions
- Persons who cannot afford sufficient heat
- Persons on prescription medications for anxiety, depression, nervousness, or nausea conditions.

If any of these conditions exist, keep the victim calm and call a doctor, ambulance or rescue squad. Cover their body, head, neck and extremities with blankets, quilts, or extra clothing. We should never try to warm a victim by elevating or massaging their limbs or by giving them hot food, drink or alcohol beverages or by applying hot water.

## FROSTBITE:

Frostbite happens when the skin is exposed to extremely cold conditions long enough to cause freezing of fluids in the skin tissues. The frozen area is usually small such as the nose, cheeks, ears, fingers, and toes.

## SIGNS & SYMPTOMS OF FROSTBITE:

- Flushed skin change to white or grayish-yellow
- Blisters may appear
- Affected parts feel intensely cool, numb, and sometimes painful.
- Victim has pale, glossy skin

Untreated frostbite can lead to confusion, loss of sight, unconsciousness, shock and even death. If frostbite does occur, get medical assistance as soon as possible. Quickly warm the part in lukewarm water (102 to 105 degrees). If warm water isn't available or not practical, wrap the part in warm blankets, quilts or extra clothing. If the hands are affected, give them some relief by placing them under warm clothing or under the armpits.

## CAUTIONS IN HANDLING FROSTBITE:

- Do not rub the affected part. Rubbing can cause the tissue to die.
- Do not attempt to warm the affected area with a heat lamp, hot water bottle or hot stove.
- Do not break blisters.
- Do not allow the victim to walk after the affected area thaws if the feet are involved.

The very best way to prevent hypothermia or frostbite is to stay warm and limit your exposure.

## PREVENTIVE MEASURES FOR FROSTBITE:

- Dress warmly with several layers of clothing. There are several fabrics now that insure good warmth when using them, such as Thinsulate in jackets and shirtings that keep you warm while wicking away perspiration.
- Avoid tight clothing. Loose fitting clothing traps more warm air around the body.
- Wear a cap or hat, as the body remains 10 degrees warmer with your head covered.
- Keep dry. Wetness greatly increases the chance of cold stress. Keep your feet dry. It is good to have some extra clothes and socks available during the cold periods.
- Eat right. A proper diet provides your body with nutrients it needs to withstand cold stress.

**~GET SMART~  
USE SAFETY FROM THE START!!**