

# Safety First



## Winter Temps can be Deadly

People in the Midwest are used to dealing with the extreme conditions winter weather brings. Blizzards keeping everyone stranded at home for days, wind chills falling well below zero and snowfall measuring in feet, not inches, does not surprise us when the end of fall is near.

Even though we are used to the weather, people still get injuries related to the cold and dangerous weather here. Frostbite and hypothermia are a couple of dangerous situations that are perfect examples. People generally know what both of them are, but if it happened to you or a friend, would you know how to recognize it or what to do about it?

Frostbite is when extremities, like ears, nose, hands, toes or cheeks, have been exposed to the cold for too long without any protection from the elements.

When something on your body becomes frostbitten, it becomes pale or grayish and it may start to look shiny or waxy. The skin may become hard and develop a painful tingling or even go numb.

To treat frostbite, affected areas should be warmed as soon as possible. They can be placed in warm, NOT hot, water. If water is not available, frostbitten areas can also be wrapped in warm blankets or clothing. Never put anything hot on or directly massage frozen tissue because that can cause even more damage.

Unless the frostbite is in no way dangerous or poses no further complications to the victim, medical attention should be sought right away.

Hypothermia is when a person's core body temperature has dropped significantly because they have been in the cold weather too long. When a person's body temperature drops to dangerous levels, it can lose its ability to reheat itself and cause serious damage to vital internal organs.

Symptoms of hypothermia include confusion, dizziness, slurred speech, blurred vision, shivering, drowsiness and impaired judgment. To treat hypothermia, you should concentrate on warming up the victim's body with heating pads, warm clothing and blankets.

Just like with frostbite, heating pads should be warm, not hot, because the extreme cold can desensitize a person's skin from distinguishing extreme temperatures. Also, when warming the body, concentrate on the core of the body. Just warming extremities does not solve the problem efficiently and it can be hard on the victim's heart.

In serious cases of hypothermia, medical attention should be sought immediately.

SDREA Loss Control