



Scope: Americas
Activity: AllLOB's
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Safety Alert

Cold Weather Precautions

PURPOSE: Preparedness for cold weather during winter operations.

WHY: Anyone working in a cold environment is at risk of cold stress. WFS employees may be required to work outdoors, in cold environments and for extended periods of time.

HAZARDS IDENTIFIED: In a cold environment, most of your body's energy is used to keep the internal core temperature warm. Over time, your body will begin to shift blood flow from your extremities (hands, feet, arms, and legs) and outer skin to your core (chest and abdomen). This shift allows exposed skin and the extremities to cool rapidly and increase the risk of frostbite and hypothermia. Combine this scenario with exposure to a wet environment, and trench foot could also be a problem.

DANGER AREAS:

Hypothermia - Hypothermia occurs the core body temperature drops to less than 95°F.

➤ **Symptoms / Care** – The most common symptom is uncontrolled shivering. You will begin to lose coordination, the ability to walk and you will become confused. Move to a warm dry area and remove wet clothing. Seek medical attention, if required.

Frostbite - Frostbite is an injury caused by the freezing of skin and underlying tissues, typically feet and hands.

➤ **Symptoms / Care** – Your skin can, 1) become reddened and develop gray/white patches, 2) become numb and feel firm or hard, and 3) possibly develop blisters. Do not attempt to re-warm the skin, seek medical help.

Trench Foot - Trench Foot can occur when your feet are exposed to cold and wet over time.

➤ **Symptoms / Care** – Your feet can swell and become numb. Remove shoes/boots and wet sock, get your feet dry. Seek medical attention, if required.

NOTE: In an emergency, immediately call 911

PROPER EQUIPMENT: Dressing properly is extremely important to preventing cold stress. The type of fabric worn also makes a difference. Cotton loses its insulation value when it becomes wet. Wool, silk and most synthetics, on the other hand, retain their insulating properties, even when wet. The following are recommendations for working in cold environments:

- Wear at least three layers of loose-fitting clothing. Layering provides better insulation. Do not wear tight fitting clothing.
- An inner layer of wool, silk or synthetic to keep moisture away from the body.
- A middle layer of wool or synthetic to provide insulation even when wet.
- An outer wind and rain protection layer that allows some ventilation to prevent overheating.
- Wearing a hat or head covering helps keep your whole-body warmer as it reduces the body heat which escapes from your head.
- Use a knit mask to cover the face and mouth (as required).
- Use insulated gloves to protect the hands (water resistant if necessary).
- Prepare ahead, have extra socks, gloves available in the event your feet or hands get wet.