



Protecting Yourself from Cold Stress

Safety Talk | Weather

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USPS employees can face many environmental hazards while performing their daily duties, including cold stress. Cold stress has the ability to cause illness, injury or become life threatening. That's why it's important that postal employees know the dangers and receive the proper training prior to performing any work activities.

The following steps should be followed in order to protect our employees from the dangers of cold stress:

- Wear proper attire for the weather conditions (ex. layers, water-resistant)
- Protect your face and extremities
- Stay dry
- Take scheduled breaks in warm areas on cold days whenever possible
- Monitor physical condition

The following are the different types of cold stress illnesses/injuries, including their symptoms and first aid treatments:

Hypothermia

Hypothermia occurs when the body loses heat faster than it can be produced, which then decreases the body temperature to dangerous levels.

Symptoms	First Aid
<i>Early Symptoms</i> • <i>Shivering</i> • <i>Fatigue</i> • <i>Confusion</i> • <i>Loss of consciousness</i> <i>Late Symptoms</i> • <i>Blue Skin</i> • <i>Dilated Pupils</i> • <i>Slow Pulse</i> • <i>Loss of consciousness</i>	• <i>Call 911</i> • <i>Notify Supervision</i> • <i>Move to a warm area</i> • <i>Increase body temperature by warming the body</i> • <i>If unconscious, perform Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR)</i>

Frostbite

Frostbite is an injury to the body caused by freezing, which can cause loss of feeling, change in skin color, skin damage and in severe cases, amputation of the affected area.

Symptoms	First Aid
• <i>Reduced blood flow to hands and feet</i> • <i>Numbness</i> • <i>Tingling</i> • <i>Blue, pale and/or waxy skin</i>	• <i>Move to a warm area</i> • <i>Increase body temperature by warming the body</i> • <i>Use warm, not hot methods to warm areas</i> • <i>Get medical attention for affected areas</i>

Trench Foot

Trench foot is an injury to the feet, caused by prolonged exposure to wet and cold conditions.

Symptoms	First Aid
• <i>Reddening of the skin</i> • <i>Numbness</i> • <i>Tingling</i> • <i>Leg cramps</i> • <i>Blisters</i> • <i>Bleeding under the skin</i> • <i>Gangrene</i>	• <i>Remove wet clothing</i> • <i>Dry the affected area</i> • <i>Avoid walking on feet to limit tissue damage</i> • <i>Get medical attention for affected areas</i>

Chilblains

Chilblains are a tissue injury that is caused by repeated exposure to cool, humid temperatures.

Symptoms	First Aid
• <i>Reddening of the skin</i> • <i>Blistering</i> • <i>Itching</i> • <i>Inflammation</i> • <i>Ulceration in severe cases</i>	• <i>Avoid scratching</i> • <i>Slowly warm the skin</i> • <i>Keep the area clean and covered</i> • <i>Use corticosteroid creams to relieve itching and swelling</i> • <i>Get medical attention for affected areas</i>