

PROTECTING WORKERS FROM COLD STRESS

COMMON TYPES OF COLD STRESS

HYPOTHERMIA

- TRUNK OF THE BODY IS COLD TO THE TOUCH.
- MILD SYMPTOMS: ALERT BUT SHIVERING.
- ADVANCED SYMPTOMS: SHIVERING STOPS, CONFUSION, SLURRED SPEECH, HEART RATE/BREATHING SLOW, LOSS OF CONSCIOUSNESS.

FROSTBITE

- BODY TISSUES FREEZE, E.G., HANDS AND FEET. CAN OCCUR AT TEMPERATURES ABOVE FREEZING, DUE TO WIND CHILL.
- SYMPTOMS: NUMBNESS, REDDENED SKIN, GRAY/WHITE PATCHES, FEELS FIRM/HARD, AND MAY BLISTER.

TRENCH FOOT (AKA IMMERSION FOOT)

- NON-FREEZING FOOT INJURY, CAUSED BY EXPOSURE TO COLD WET ENVIRONMENT. CAN OCCUR AT AIR TEMPERATURE AS HIGH AS 60°F, IF FEET ARE CONSTANTLY WET.
- SYMPTOMS: REDNESS, SWELLING, NUMBNESS, AND BLISTERS.

RISK FACTORS

- DRESSING IMPROPERLY, WET CLOTHING/SKIN, AND EXHAUSTION.
- NOT MONITORING WEATHER FORECASTS.

PREVENTION

- TRAIN ON COLD STRESS.
- USE ENGINEERING CONTROLS, E.G., SAFELY PROVIDE RADIANT HEATERS.
- GRADUALLY INTRODUCE WORKERS TO THE COLD; MONITOR WORKERS; SCHEDULE BREAKS IN WARM AREAS.
- KNOW THE SYMPTOMS; MONITOR YOURSELF AND CO-WORKERS.
- DRINK WARM, NON-ALCOHOLIC SWEETENED FLUIDS.
- DRESS PROPERLY:
 - LAYERS OF LOOSE-FITTING, INSULATED CLOTHES
 - INSULATED JACKET, GLOVES, AND A HAT (WATERPROOF, IF NECESSARY)
 - INSULATED AND WATERPROOF BOOTS