



Winter Safety: Telcom's 4th quarter Safety Mailing **The Cold Hard Facts About Frostbite and Hypothermia**

Q. What are the signs of frostbite?

A. Frostbite usually occurs in the fingers, toes, heels, hands, nose and feet. It happens **only** in subfreezing temperatures. Characteristics of frostbite are numb, red and slightly swollen skin. It may look grey or yellowish, but becomes red and flaky after thawing. Blisters will appear with deep frostbite, and skin may become cold, waxy, pale and hard. Pain may lessen and disappear.

Q. What are the signs of hypothermia?

A. Look for impaired motor skills, speech and decision-making abilities. Victims may seem confused or deny that they are cold. They may seem weak or tired, breathe more shallowly and stop shivering. Decreased body temperature affects the victims' mental state, and causes them to act irrationally. As the body gets colder, muscles become stiff and the heartbeat is uneven. Unconsciousness and death can follow. Hypothermia **does not** require subfreezing temperatures. If you get caught in a rainstorm, fall into water for an extended period of time, or perspire in cool weather you could become a victim.

Q. Are these conditions life-threatening?

A. Frostbite is limb threatening; hypothermia is life threatening. Your body has a natural defense mechanism to fight cold. Blood is redirected to the internal vital organs when your core body temperature is threatened. This can put your limbs at risk but could also save your life.

Q. How can you protect yourself from the cold?

A. Eat, drink and rest often. Dress in layers. Your ability to ward off the cold weather is directly related to what you put on and into your body. Food produces heat for your body. Fluids increase your blood volume, causing the extremities to freeze more slowly. Your body may demand more water in the winter than in the summer. Some fluids should be avoided. Caffeine is diuretic and will cause you to lose fluid. Alcohol opens the blood vessels in the skin causing you to lose heat faster.

Q. How do you treat frostbite?

A. Submerge frostbitten parts into water that is not quite hot to the touch. Take aspirin to prevent blood clotting and for pain relief. Seek medical attention.

Q. How do you treat hypothermia?

A. Remove wet clothing. Add insulation beneath and around the victim. Cover the head. Seek medical attention for severe hypothermia.

Q. What should you do if you're stranded and far from help?

A. Limit physical activity. Remain in your vehicle and leave it running periodically. Be sure snow isn't blocking the exhaust. Don't touch any metal surfaces. Keep your hands in your groin or armpits. If stuck in cold water huddle with others. If you're alone, curl into a ball.

Q. What should you pack in your car in case you get stranded?

A. High carbohydrate and sugar foods, waterproof matches, shovel, wool blanket, wool clothing, sleeping bag, ice scraper, flashlight and extra batteries, container to melt snow for drinking and any needed medications.

Use the clip on these ice scrapers to keep them attached to your visor and readily accessible to make sure your vision isn't impaired by winter conditions like ice when driving your vehicles.

Contact Marilyn at MAB@TelcomInsGrp.com or 301.220.1085 if you would like more ice scrapers to promote safe winter driving to your employees.