



# TDCJ Risk Management's Training Circular

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## September Cooler Times



One thing to remember about Texas, is that if you don't like the weather, just wait a minute and it will soon change. Even though throughout the state temperatures are still some of the hottest of the year, during September it can be expected that cold fronts will begin to move across the state. Addressed here are some concerns about cold weather exposures.



### Dangers of Cold Weather

When fall and winter temperatures drop significantly below normal, staying warm and safe can become a challenge. Extremely cold temperatures often accompany a winter storm, so you may have to cope with power failures and icy roads.

Although staying indoors as much as possible can help reduce the risk of car crashes and falls on the ice, you may also face indoor hazards. Many homes will be too cold - either due to a power failure or because the heating system isn't adequate for the weather. When people must use space heaters and fireplaces to stay warm, the risk of household fires increases, as well as the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning.



To keep yourself and your family safe, you should know how to prevent cold-related health problems and what to do if a cold-weather health emergency arises.

Hypothermia and frostbite are two serious consequences of working outdoors in the winter months. TDCJ has a lot of positions that require employees and offenders to be outdoors regardless of the temperature or any other weather condition. We can't stop winter, therefore we need to protect ourselves from the cold by being familiar and prepared. Each year Administrative Directive AD - 10.64 (Temperature Extremes in the TDCJ Workplace) cold weather training is provided to unit staff and offenders by Health Services with the assistance of Risk Management. Unit Wardens use the wind - chill index located in AD - 10.64, local weather/news stations, or the instruments located on the unit to determine

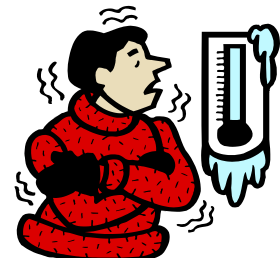


### Do you know the 5 P's of Cold Weather Preparedness?

- P** - Protect People
- P** - Protect Plants
- P** - Protect Pets
- P** - Protect exposed piping
- P** - Practice fire safety

Exposure to cold temperatures, whether indoors or outside, can cause serious or life-threatening health problems. Infants and the elderly are particularly at risk, but anyone can

the safety of cold weather working conditions.



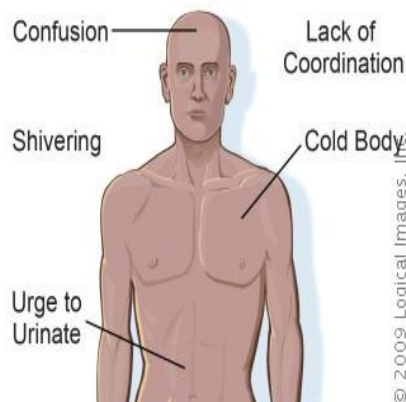
### Understanding Hypothermia

Hypothermia is a dangerous lowering of the body's temperature by exposure to cold or wet conditions. The air temperature doesn't have to be particularly low to cause hypothermia - just being wet and chilled can do the same thing. Low body temperature can affect the brain, making the victim unable to think clearly, therefore a person may not know what is happening and won't be able to do anything about it.

### Hypothermia Symptoms

- Chills, shivering and exhaustion
- Inability to think straight or speak coherently
- Fumbling hands
- Irrational behavior
- Poor coordination
- Loss of consciousness

**Victims of hypothermia are often:**



- Newly assigned to a job exposed to cold temperatures
- Elderly people with inadequate food, clothing, or heating.
- People who remain outside for long periods without adequate clothing/blankets.
- People who are wet when exposed to cold weather

- People who drink alcohol and use illicit drugs.

### Hypothermia Prevention

- Dress warmly. Wear a hat, waterproof boots and gloves.
- Dress in layers so you can add or remove clothing as the temperature changes.

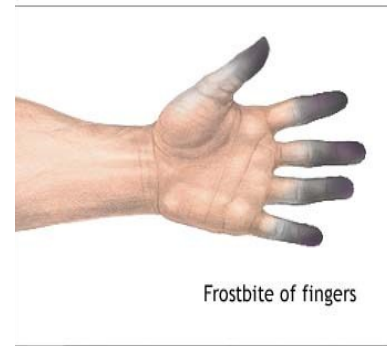


- Keep your clothes dry. Put on your waterproof gear before you get wet. Carry an extra set of dry clothes.
- Eat regular meals with enough carbohydrates and fats so that your body can keep producing heat.
- Drink fluids.
- Stay away from alcoholic beverages.
- Stay active in cold weather and take rest periods in a warm dry place.
- Move extremities often to enhance blood circulation.
- If you start developing signs of hypothermia, get to a shelter promptly and seek medical attention as soon as possible.

### Understanding Frostbite

Frostbite is another cold - weather danger. It is an injury which occurs when the body tissue freezes. The fingers, toes, face and ears are the most likely to be damaged. Frostbite makes the skin numb, giving it a white and waxy appearance. If the skin be-

comes frostbitten, it is better to have it thawed at a hospital by professionals. But if you cannot get to medical help, warm the frostbitten area gradually with body heat, tepid water, or blankets. **DO NOT** use hot water or direct heat. **DO NOT** rub the affected area with your hands because you will do or cause more damage.



### Frostbite Prevention

Keep all of your extremities covered. Cover your cheeks in cold or windy conditions.

- Carry spare gloves, mittens, liners and socks in case yours gets wet.
- Make sure that the gloves and footwear do not fit so tightly that they can cut off circulation.
- Check yourself for frostbite by making sure you can move your fingers and toes and that you still have feeling in your face.



### Staff and Offender Care

Staff and offenders who work outside and will be exposed to cold weather conditions for extended periods such as; agriculture, and outside industrial areas should dress with the necessary clothing to help prevent cold weather exposure. Here are the types of clothing that may be appropriate:

- Thermal underwear
- Insulated jackets
- Cotton gloves
- Insulated hoods
- Leather gloves
- Heavy work shoes
- Socks.

Care shall be taken to prevent perspiration which could soak clothes and compromise the clothing's insulating value.



**Remember** layers of clothing shall be removed or added according to the temperature and physical activity.

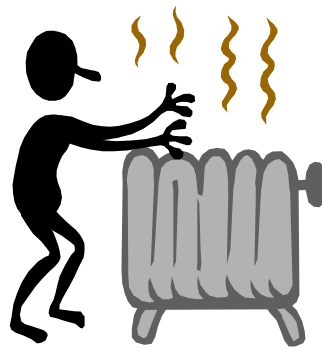
### Portable Space Heaters

Colder temperatures often prompt the use of portable space heaters. The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 101

Life Safety Code prohibits the use of portable space heaters in correctional/detention occupancies. Other administrative areas should exercise caution when using space heaters.

Purchase only space heaters that have been safety tested and UL approved. Make sure the unit is equipped with an emergency tip-over shut-off feature and heating element guards. Read and follow all of the manufacturer's instructions for operation and care. Check to make sure the heater is clean and in good condition, and have all problems professionally repaired.

**Do not overload circuits.** Never use extension cords or multiple plugs with a space heater, and make sure the unit is not plugged into the same circuit as other electric appliances.



### References

- AD-10.64-Temperature Extremes in the TDCJ Workplace
- NFPA 101 Life Safety Code
- Laundry & Necessities Procedures Manual -01.02 Allocation of Necessities



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