



## AMR News

## For Immediate Release

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## COLD WEATHER CAN BE DEADLY

Dateline (**LBTS, Florida 01/05/10**) – Plunging temperatures are a direct threat to life and limb, especially for the elderly, small children, the chronically-ill, substance-abusers and individuals who stay out in the cold for long periods.

American Medical Response (AMR) ambulance service gives this advice for avoiding, recognizing and treating two deadly cold-related illnesses, hypothermia and frostbite. Both can happen even in areas known for warm weather, **especially when wind chill and getting soaked with cold water or rain are involved.**

To avoid hypothermia and frostbite wear at least three layers of clothing, even indoors. Layering the clothes provides much more protection than one thick garment. The layer closest to the body should be thin and made of polyester or similar material to pull moisture from your skin. The next layers should be bulkier, providing more insulation. Wool is a good material as are newer materials such as polyester pile. When you're outdoors, the top layer should resist rain, sleet or snow and have zippers for venting body heat if you become too warm.

- Wear a stocking cap. Forty percent of body heat escapes through the scalp.
- Wear mittens rather than gloves because mittens keep hands warmer.

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- Immediately remove any clothing that gets wet.
- Keep at least one room in the home at a comfortable temperature. Close the doors to other rooms that are not in use. To conserve heat, jam towels or blankets under gaps at the bottom of doors.
- In cold weather, elderly people should be checked on frequently because age weakens the body's ability to sense and adapt to temperature changes.

Hypothermia is a general cooling of the body's internal temperature. Hypothermia victims go through stages of shivering, numbness, confusion, drowsiness and eventually, they become unconscious. Unless emergency aid is provided, death soon follows.

First aid for hypothermia includes removing the person from the cold setting. Give CPR if needed. Remove wet clothes, wrap the patient in warm materials and if – and only if – the victim is alert, give warm non-alcoholic drinks. Never give anything by mouth to someone who is less than fully alert.

Frostbite is the actual freezing of a body part, most often the fingers, toes, ears or nose. The part often feels hard and waxy and may be discolored.

First aid for frostbite includes removing the person from the cold setting. Handle the affected part gently to protect it from further injury. Do not rub the frostbitten part. Do not allow the victim to try to use the part, such as walking on frostbitten toes. Wrap the part in a dry, sterile dressing. Never put ice on frostbite.

Re-warm the frostbitten body part only if hospital care is remote or unavailable. After re-warming, never let the part re-freeze.

When hypothermia or frostbite is suspected, call for trained, equipped help from your local ambulance service immediately.

*American Medical Response Inc. ([www.amr.net](http://www.amr.net)), America's leading provider of medical transportation, provides services in 38 states and the District of Columbia. AMR's 18,500 paramedics, EMTs and other professionals transport more than four million patients nationwide each year in critical, emergency and non-emergency situations. Operating a fleet of approximately 4,500 vehicles, AMR, a subsidiary of Emergency Medical Services Corporation, is headquartered in Greenwood Village, CO.*

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