

Resource document:

Winter

Wind Chill/Frostbite

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Narrative:

Our Army conducts operations worldwide and because of that, there is a need to be aware of climate issues, both hot and cold, which affect Soldiers.

In cold weather locations, approximately 130 cases of frostbite per year have been reported in our Army for each of the past five years.

Frostbite accounts for the largest number of cold weather related injuries to Soldiers each year.

Frostbite isn't the only cold weather threat, wind chill has been described as 'One of the gravest dangers of winter weather' according to the National Weather Service.

Mission effectiveness could be impacted by not understanding how to manage weather related issues.

Key Messages:

- Incidents of frostbite involving Soldiers have remained steady for the past five years at approximately 130 cases per year, according to information from the Thermal and Mountain Medicine Division, U.S. Army Research Institute of Environmental Medicine, Natick, Mass.
- Frostbite accounts for the largest number of cold injuries to Soldiers each year, five times higher than trench foot, according to 'Prevention and Management of Cold Weather Related Injuries,' Technical Bulletin Medical 508, April 2005.
- Soldiers need to be aware that man-made wind caused by riding in open vehicles or exposure to propeller/rotary-generated wind increases the risk of frostbite.
- Wet skin increases the risk of frostbite to Soldiers, Families and Civilians.
- Wind chill can be a threat even during periods of low wind velocity.

Talking points:

Soldiers should understand the acronym C-O-L-D. **C:** Keep it clean; **O:** Avoid overheating; **L:** Wear clothing loose and in layers; **D:** Keep clothing dry.

The frostbite incidence rate is higher for African-Americans and young, enlisted Soldiers.

Tools for avoiding frostbite involve simple yet effective countermeasures. It requires leaders follow a systematic risk assessment before conducting cold weather operations to identify potential hazards and plan accordingly.

Soldiers and leaders must understand the proper use of clothing to avoid cold related injury.

Other tools to reduce cold related injuries involve proper diet, importance of hydration and avoiding prolonged exposure to cold without opportunities to warm.

Tips:

Understand how cold weather related issues can impact mission readiness or effectiveness.

Soldiers and leaders need to understand how to operate in cold weather and take the necessary steps to reduce cold weather related injuries.

Battle buddies must monitor each other for symptoms of cold related issues such as frostbite and wind chill.

Historical Reference:

For additional winter weather safety information, visit:

<https://safety.army.mil/>
<http://www.usariem.army.mil/>
<http://phc.amedd.army.mil/Pages/default.aspx>

Statistics:

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