

## **Resource document:**

# **Winter Hypothermia**

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### **Narrative:**

One challenge our Army faces is managing the variety of environments where it operates and Soldiers and leaders must understand how to achieve mission success in spite of weather-related hazards.

Common cold-weather injuries facing Soldiers, Families and Civilians include frostbite, wind chill and hypothermia. Each risk can be managed by following established procedures and practices.

Not just adults are at risk from cold-weather risks, children and pets can be affected.

### **Key Messages:**

- Learn to operate, survive and achieve mission success in cold weather. Soldiers and leaders must monitor Soldiers to ensure they're wearing proper clothing and cold weather items and using them properly.
- Ensure Soldiers and leaders understand how to spot symptoms of hypothermia and be ready to take action to assist those affected.
- Family members who are outside in cold weather can also be affected and Family members must monitor others for signs of hypothermia.

### **Talking points:**

Protection against hypothermia is best provided by wearing clothing in layers, not sweating during cold-weather exercise, and staying dry.

Other safety tips include avoiding activities that would cause you to sweat a lot, wearing loose fitting, layered, lightweight clothing and staying as dry as possible

When your body temperature drops, your heart, nervous system and other organs can't

work correctly. Left untreated, hypothermia can eventually lead to complete failure of your heart and respiratory system and to death.

### **Tips:**

Get out of wet clothing as soon as possible. Be especially careful to keep your hands and feet dry, as it's easy for snow to get into mittens and boots.

Hypothermia is more likely to occur when it is wet and cold (e.g, 45°F degree day with heavy rain), during immersion in water less than 70°F, or exposure to very low temperatures with little clothing available.

Wear a hat or other protective covering to prevent body heat from escaping from the head, face and neck.

Understand the symptoms and be prepared to take action to assist Soldiers or Family members if needed.

Cold weather injuries remain a major threat to individual health and unit performance during training and operations.

### **Historical Reference:**

<https://safety.army.mil/>

<http://www.afhsc.mil/home>

<http://www.usariem.army.mil/>

### **Statistics:**

- The Armed Forces Health Surveillance Center reported 306 cold weather injuries among active and reserve Soldiers during the 2010-11 cold weather season.
- Of those injuries, 38 were hypothermia.

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