

# Cold Weather Safety Tips

## From Emergency Medical Services (EMS)

Emergency Medical Services (EMS) responds to a number of cold weather emergencies every winter. However, you can reduce your risk of sustaining a cold weather emergency by taking a few simple precautions:

- Dress with warm insulating layers closer to the body, covering with wind and waterproof layers on the outside.
- Don't forget a toque, and carry an emergency roadside kit in your vehicle containing extra clothing, blankets, and emergency supplies.
- Make sure your cellular device is completely charged when you travel.

### What is Frostnip?

- Frost-nipped skin is extremely cold, but not yet frozen skin
- It commonly affects the ears, nose, cheeks, fingers and toes
- The skin may look red and possibly feel numb to the touch
- When treated promptly, frostnip usually heals without complication
- Move to a warm environment and immediately, but gently, rewarm the affected area through skin to skin contact (i.e. hand covering tips of ears)

### What is Frostbite?

- Frostbite occurs when skin becomes so cold, the skin and underlying tissues freeze
- Affected skin may look white and waxy and will feel hard to the touch
- Move to a warm environment immediately and place the affected area in warm, not hot, water, until fully re-warmed
- Seek further medical attention as required

### What is Hypothermia?

- Hypothermia is abnormally low body temperature, less than 34°C (as compared to normal body temperature of about 37°C)
- Early hypothermia may manifest as profound shivering; moderate hypothermic patients may act inappropriately: stumbling, mumbling, and fumbling, as their body temperature continues to drop resulting in severe hypothermia (<30°C)
- Left untreated, severe hypothermia may progress to unconsciousness or death
- Early recognition and prompt medical attention is key. Don't forget to protect yourself from the factors that originally lead to the patient's situation
- Initiate gentle re-warming as quickly as possible. Remove any wet or constrictive clothing; cover with blankets, or sleeping bags. Protect from further heat loss: eliminate contact with cold surfaces, and shield from wind and moisture.