

# **GREENFIELD FIRE DEPARTMENT**

## *Hypothermia and Frostbite*

**HYPOTHERMIA:** Which means a significantly low internal body temperature; it can be very serious and sometimes fatal.

**FROSTBITE:** Is actual freezing of body tissue. The most susceptible areas are the fingers, toes, nose and ears.

THE FOLLOWING CONDITIONS INCREASE SUSCEPTIBILITY TO HYPOTHERMIA AND FROSTBITE OR BOTH:

- Wind-chill factor
- High altitude
- Dampness or immersion in cold water
- Contact with cold metal
- Alcohol ingestion
- Circulatory problems
- Young children
- Elderly

### **HYPOTHERMIA**

EARLY SIGN OF:

- Shivering
- Pale skin
- Lethargy (sluggish)
- Mental dullness

LATE SIGNS OF:

- Confusion, disorientation
- Loss of consciousness
- Slow, shallow breathing
- slow, weak pulse

### **SIGNS OF FROSTBITE**

Frostbite often takes victims by surprise; since there is not pain involved initially.

- At first there is redness, a burning sensation, and decreased feeling.
- As frostbite progresses, the affected area's become insensitive to cold.
- Skin becomes hard and white on the surface, but still soft inside.
- The area later loses feeling and becomes hard on the inside as well.

### **PREVENTION**

- Wear adequate clothing in several loose layers.
- Keep your head and neck covered. (Area of high heat loses).
- Keep your clothes and body dry.
- Continually move exposed extremities.
- Seek warm shelter immediately if you notice any early warning signs of frostbite or hypothermia.

### **TREATMENT FOR FROSTBITE OR HYPOTHERMIA**

Once symptoms of hypothermia or frostbite are noted, it is important to prevent any further heat loss and/or tissue damage by getting out of the cold immediately and removing any wet clothing. **Seek medical attention as soon as possible.**

In cases of severe hypothermia, keep the victim warm and still and quickly transport the victim to the nearest Emergency Department. Handle gently in order to prevent irregular heartbeats.

Courtesy Greenfield Fire department  
Fire Prevention Bureau  
Business 774-4737      Emergency 911