

Hypothermia and Frostbite Care

This playbook outlines the steps for recognizing, treating, and preventing hypothermia and frostbite, which are critical skills in cold environments. It describes emergency response and post-incident care to mitigate health risks.

Step 1: **Assess Symptoms**

Evaluate the individual for symptoms of hypothermia and frostbite. For hypothermia, look for shivering, exhaustion, confusion, fumbling hands, memory loss, slurred speech, and drowsiness. For frostbite, check for white or grayish-yellow skin areas, skin that feels unusually firm or waxy, and numbness.

Step 2: **Seek Shelter**

Move the affected individual to a warm, sheltered area as soon as possible to prevent further exposure to cold temperatures.

Step 3: **Remove Wet Clothing**

Gently remove any wet clothing the individual is wearing and replace with dry, warm layers.

Step 4: **Warm Gradually**

Begin rewarming the person with gentle methods. Use blankets or body heat to warm them. If hypothermia is severe, seek medical attention immediately.

Step 5: **Hydrate**

Provide the individual with warm, sweet, non-alcoholic beverages to aid in the rewarming process if they are awake and able to swallow.

Step 6: **Protect Frostbitten Areas**

If frostbite is present, protect and cover the affected areas. Do not rub them, as this can cause more damage. Gently warm the area if possible, but avoid direct heat.

Step 7: **Seek Medical Help**

If symptoms are severe, showing signs of moderate to severe hypothermia or frostbite, call for emergency medical assistance immediately.

Step 8: **Follow Up**

After initial treatment, continue to monitor the individual's condition. Watch for any signs of improvement or deterioration, and be ready to offer or seek additional medical help as needed.

General Notes

Preventative Measures

To prevent hypothermia and frostbite, dress in layers that can be adjusted to changing conditions, cover extremities, stay dry, keep active to generate body heat, know the weather forecast, and take frequent breaks in warm locations.