

# Safety Matters

## Landscaping

Provided by: SCS Agency Inc

### Preventing and Responding to Hypothermia

Working outdoors in the winter can expose you to dangerously low temperatures. This cold weather can heighten your risk of experiencing a variety of complications—such as hypothermia.

That's why it's crucial to utilize proper safety measures while you work in frigid temperatures. Review the following guidance to learn more about what hypothermia is, how to prevent it and what to do in the event that a co-worker develops any symptoms.

#### What Is Hypothermia?

Hypothermia can occur when your body's core temperature falls below 95 degrees Fahrenheit. This condition is typically caused by exposure to extreme cold, but can also happen after getting drenched by rain or submerged in frigid water.

Common symptoms of hypothermia include:

- Shivering
- Drowsiness and exhaustion
- Confusion
- Shallow breathing
- Slurred speech
- Loss of coordination
- Unconsciousness

If left ignored or improperly treated, hypothermia can be fatal.

#### Preventing Hypothermia

Implement the following safety precautions to help prevent hypothermia on the job:

- Always check the weather before working outdoors to properly prepare yourself. Try

to limit your time outside if weather conditions are extremely cold, wet or windy.

- Wear several breathable, yet protective layers of clothing while you work. This includes an inner layer to keep sweat away from the skin (lightweight wool), a middle layer to warm the body (fleece or microfiber insulation) and an outer layer that will repel wind, snow and rain (polyester or nylon). In addition to these layers, make sure you bundle up with:
  - A hat that covers your head and ears
  - A scarf or neck warmer
  - Mittens (rather than gloves)
  - Thick, wool socks
  - Waterproof boots that will keep your feet properly insulated
- Be sure to eat healthy foods that are rich in carbohydrates and protein prior to working in the cold to help fuel your body. Stay hydrated by drinking plenty of water before, during and after your shift.
- If you start developing any early symptoms of hypothermia (e.g., shivering and drowsiness), tell your supervisor and go indoors to warm up. If your condition doesn't improve, seek medical attention.



### Responding to Hypothermia

In the event that a co-worker starts showing signs of hypothermia, follow these steps:

- Move the individual out of the cold and inform your supervisor immediately. If the individual is unresponsive or not breathing, call 911. Provide CPR if needed (as long as you are certified to do so).
- Remove any wet clothing that the individual is wearing. Provide them with warm clothing and blankets for insulation.
- Keep the individual close to a heat source, such as a space heater or fireplace.
- Be gentle with the individual—never rub or massage their skin in an attempt to warm them up, as this could trigger cardiac arrest.
- If the individual is awake and alert, give them a warm (but not hot) beverage. Avoid offering them coffee or alcohol.

Keep in mind that these steps are not a substitute for proper medical care. Unless the individual's symptoms are extremely mild, it is recommended that they seek medical attention.

### Safety First

Your safety is our first priority. Talk to your supervisor if you have any further questions on preventing or responding to hypothermia.