

LAYER UP AGAINST THE CHILL

This winter, make sure you're dressed to the nines when you step outside. Nine layers of clothing, that is. OK, maybe it doesn't take a full nine layers of clothing to keep you warm and safe from winter's harsh chill. However, wearing at least a few layers of the proper kind of fabrics is essential to your comfort and well-being.

That's especially true for outdoor workers who spend a lot of time outside in the cold months. They're at risk for hypothermia, a condition in which your body temperature drops because it's losing more heat than it can replace.

Hypothermia causes a gradual reduction in physical and mental functioning that may go unnoticed until it's too late. A person suffering hypothermia can become increasingly confused, sleepy, unreasonable and clumsy. Undetected and untreated, hypothermia can cause death.

Don't think you're safe just because you put on a heavy coat. Layering your clothing is a more effective way to prevent hypothermia. Multiple layers of thinner clothing provide better insulation and help reduce the loss of body heat.

Select the appropriate fabrics as the inner layers next to your skin. Cotton is a bad choice. It holds sweat, and becomes cold and clammy. Instead, choose polypropylene and other synthetic fabrics that move moisture away from your skin.

Here are some other recommendations:

- Wool is the best material to wear when it's cold. Wear it over your inner layers of synthetic fabrics.
- Wear a hat. You can lose 70 percent of your body heat through your head.
- Gloves and mittens also conserve your precious body heat. Mittens keep your hands warmer.
- Wear roomy boots that let you layer your socks.
- Stay dry. Getting wet is a major factor in causing hypothermia and frostbite.