

TOOLBOX TALK #52

FROSTBITE: DO'S AND DON'TS

Did you know?

“Even skin that is protected can be subject to frostbite,” the National Safety Council (NSC) says. Signs of frostbite include skin that looks red, white, bluish-white, grayish-yellow, purplish, brown, or ashen, depending on the severity of the condition and the person’s skin color. The affected area may feel numb as well. The condition can affect the fingers, toes, ears, and face.

If caught early, it is possible to prevent permanent damage, according to the NSC. If not, frostbite can cause tissue death and lead to amputation.

Follow these do’s and don’ts if you or a co-worker is experiencing frostbite.

DO

- Seek medical care immediately.
- If medical care will be delayed and there’s no danger of the skin refreezing, go into a warm room and immerse the affected area in lukewarm water (99-104°F) for 20 to 30 minutes only.
- Remove wet clothing and constricting items and protect between fingers and toes with dry gauze.
- Warm the extremities with your own body heat. For example, hold frostbitten fingers under your arm.
- Protect and elevate the affected area.

DON'T

- Rub the frostbitten area with snow.
- Massage the frostbitten area or walk on frostbitten toes.
- Use a heating pad, heat lamp hot water or other high-temperature heat sources to warm the skin.
- Use chemical warmers directly on frostbitten tissue.

