

EMERGENCIES

Cold Weather Injuries

Frostbite, hypothermia and snow blindness are the most common snowmobiling injuries. Recognizing the early symptoms of these injuries and knowing how to treat them is important and can prevent undue permanent injury and possibly death. For our own and others protection, enroll in a certified first aid course.

Frostbite: The crystallization, either superficially or deeply, of the fluids and underlying soft tissues of the skin, is the most common cold weather injury. The nose, cheeks, ears, fingers and toes are the areas most commonly affected by frostbite. Often the victim is not aware of the frostbite until they are told by someone else. As frostbite develops, the symptoms follow this order.

1. The affected skin may be slightly flushed.
2. The skin changes to white or grayish-yellow in appearance.
3. Pain (often there is no pain) is sometimes felt but subsides later.
4. Blisters may appear.
5. The affected part feels intensely cold and numb.
6. Mental confusion and impairment of judgment set in.
7. The victim staggers.
8. Eyesight fails.
9. The victim falls and may become unconscious.
10. Shock is evident.
11. Breathing may cease.

Minor frostbite may be treated by slowly warming the affected area. **Do not rub the frostbitten area.** Severe frostbite must be treated by a Physician.

Hypothermia: The state at which the body is losing heat faster that it can produce it, drains valuable energy from the body. As hypothermia develops, the symptoms follow this order.

1. Uncontrolled shivering and fumbling hands.
2. Numbness and memory lapses.
3. A dangerously low body temperature.
4. Stupor, frequent stumbling and a lurching walk.
5. Vague slow speech, drowsiness and apparent exhaustion.
6. The victim collapses.

Hypothermia should be treated by a Physician as soon as possible. In the meantime, the victim should be covered with warm dry clothing and/or blankets. The best way to prevent hypothermia is to dress adequately and to stay dr.

Snow blindness: Snow blindness is a condition snowmobilers may experience during medium-bright to intense sunshine days. The symptoms are the following.

1. Severe headache.
2. Dizziness.
3. Sensitivity to light and seeing stars.

The recommended treatment is immediate removal to a totally dark area. Snow blindness can be prevented by wearing the proper-lensed goggles or properly colored face shield.