

HYPOTHERMIA AND FROSTBITE

(You should know the signs and basic first aid – It could save a life)

HYPOTHERMIA (Know the signs, especially if you are riding with small children)

Hypothermia is a condition where your body is unable to maintain a warm temperature. This causes the temperature of the main organs (heart, kidneys, lungs and brain) to drop. The loss of temperature can be caused by many conditions. It is important to know that both dry and wet cold can cause hypothermia. A person's age, health, length of time exposed to the cold, and clothing can all contribute to hypothermia.

One of the first signs of hypothermia is shivering. The shivering is caused by your bodies attempt to warm itself. Signs of more advanced hypothermia include intense uncontrolled shivering, skin may become pale, and signs of confusion may appear. It is important to prevent further heat loss. Remove the victim from the wind, cold or wet environment. The person should move closer to artificial heat, eat hot food and add more clothing.

The more dangerous level of hypothermia is when the shivering stops. Once the person has passed this first stage, the cold will begin to affect the brain. From this point on, the person will be able to recover only with the help of others.

The person may look pale or blue. Movement will be slow. The body is reacting to the heat loss by conserving all warmth for the main organs. Hence, less blood is being pumped to hands, arms, feet, legs, and skin. The brain's reasoning power is affected, and main organs begin to slow down as temperature lowers.

At this point the person should be removed from the cold. Slowly re-warm the victim of hypothermia as soon as possible. Start a fire and give the person something warm (not hot) to drink. **(Do not give coffee, tea or alcohol.)** Put dry clothing on the victim and be sure the head and neck are covered with a hat or scarf. The victim must be taken to a medical facility as soon as possible.

Remember - If you are snowmobiling and start to feel cold, it is important to stop and let someone know you are cold. You should always carry extra clothing with you.

FROSTBITE:

To prevent and identify frostbite, frequent checks of each other's exposed skin is necessary. Frostbite turns the skin white. Warm the affected area as soon as possible, but warm it slowly NEVER use hot water. Do not rub the frostbitten part with snow or your hands. Rubbing creates friction and it can actually cause tiny rips in your skin when frozen. Warm pressure against the part is best. Place warm clothing or a blanket over the part, but do not try to warm it too quickly near a fire or heater. Get the person in indoors as soon as possible. Severe frostbite requires immediate medical attention before permanent damage sets in.