Some basics on Hypothermia and Frostbite
From United Neighborhood Health Services (UNHS)

Hypothermia

- Occurs when a person's core body temperature falls below 95 degrees (level of severity defined according to body temp.).

- Signs/symptoms include: exhaustion, numbness, cold sensation, shivering, pale or flushed skin, decreased hand coordination, slurred speech and confusion.

- Can cause heart, brain and kidneys to malfunction (may be life-threatening). Also impairs judgment.

- Risks heightened by use of alcohol, nicotine, drugs and some medications (i.e., alcohol causes blood vessels at the surface of the skin to dilate, accelerating loss of body heat).

- Hypothermia doesn't occur only in cold temperatures; wind and precipitation can also be factors (i.e. wet clothing causes a 20% increase in heat loss).

- Other risk factors: malnutrition, decreased body fat, infections, poor fitness, fatigue.

Frostbite

- Occurs when local tissue freezes or is injured. (Different from **Frostnip**, where cold-related tingling and numbness occur without tissue damage.)

- Classified from 1st to 4th degree, with superficial frostbite (1st and 2nd degree) affecting only skin and nearby tissues, whereas deep frostbite (3rd and 4th degree) may affect bones, joints and tendons.

- Frostbite can occur with any degree of hypothermia.

- Frostbitten areas often develop sensory loss and increased sensitivity to cold that may last for years. Areas may also develop arthritis and chronic pain.

- Other risk factors: diabetes, smoking, infected wounds.

Prevention

- Shelter and warmth/heat (nonjudgmental and unconditional).
- Clothing, especially a static layer of warm air, keeping the body dry and keeping wind out.
- Hats (up to 50% of a person's body heat can be lost through an uncovered head).