

news & notes

SEAT BELT STUDY

A National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) study shows that daytime seat belt use reached 90.1 percent in 2015, up from 88.5 percent in 2014. Even with higher use, NHTSA notes that nearly half (48 percent) of people killed in crashes in 2015 were not wearing their belts. When used properly, lap/shoulder belts reduce the risk of death to front-seat occupants by 45 percent and the risk of moderate-to-critical injury by 50 percent.

In 2015 seat belts saved nearly 14,000 lives and since 1975, seat belts have saved an estimated 375,000 lives. NHTSA credits state legislators for enacting strong laws, and the nation's police officers for strong enforcement of those laws.

Seat belt use is higher in the West than in other regions of the United States and in states with primary belt use laws. In 34 states, the District of Columbia, American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, drivers can be stopped for failure to use seat belts. In states with secondary laws, drivers can be cited only if they are stopped for another violation.



"Oh boy, I hope we don't get frostbite!"

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Frostbite: Be aware!

Do you know what to do?

Working in cold conditions exposes you to the risk of frostbite. Frostbite can be very serious, but it is easily preventable if you take some simple precautions. Frostbite happens when your skin freezes from exposure to severe cold or contact with very cold objects, damaging cells and blood vessels. The freezing point for skin is about 30 degrees Fahrenheit (°F). Usually, frostbite affects the fingers, toes, cheeks, nose, and ears. In severe cases, frostbite causes tissue death, which can require amputation or lead to a loss of function in that body part.

When does frostbite occur?

You are more likely to get frostbite when conditions are windy as well as cold. The "wind chill" is a number that represents the combined effects of temperature and wind.

If you experience frostbite, first, the affected body part will feel cold and numb. Then, you might feel a tingling, stinging, or aching sensation. At first, your skin will be waxy and will look almost white. In severe cases, these symptoms will be followed by heat, redness, swelling, blistering, and a color change in your skin to red and then to black.

What can you do?

DO warm the frostbitten body parts gradually with body heat.
DON'T heat the skin suddenly using extremely hot water, a fireplace, or other high-heat sources.
DON'T rub the frostbitten area. This can cause more damage.
DO use warm (not hot) water between 102°F and 110°F to warm the frostbitten body part.
DO apply a sterile dressing to blisters.
DON'T thaw severely frostbitten skin if there is a risk of refreezing.
DO get medical attention for severe cases of frostbite.

Prevent frostbite with the following precautions:

- In cold conditions, especially if it is also windy, cover as much of your skin as possible. Make sure to protect your ears, face, hands, and feet.
- Wear waterproof, insulated boots and warm socks.
- If you can, wear mittens rather than gloves because they keep your hands warmer. If you must wear gloves, make sure they are insulated and waterproof.
- Dress in several layers of loose, warm clothing. Wear synthetic materials that wick moisture away from your skin, and make sure your clothing is not cutting off circulation to any of your body parts.
- If your clothing becomes wet, remove it and change into dry clothing.

Workplace fatalities on the rise

Recently, the federal government reported a total of 5,190 fatal work injuries in the United States in 2016, a 7% increase from 2015. It's the third consecutive rise in fatalities, and the first time since 2008 that the number of deaths has topped 5,000. The fatality rate increased to 3.6 per 100,000 full-time equivalent workers, up from 3.4 in 2015.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) reports that injuries involving transportation incidents remained the most common type in 2016, accounting for 40%. Violence and other injuries by persons or animals increased 23%, the second most common cause in 2016. Deaths caused by exposure to harmful substances or environments rose 22%, while those attributed to fires and explosions declined 27%.

The BLS survey also found that:

- Fatalities from falls, slips, or trips increased 6% to 849 in 2016, up 25% since 2011.
- Overdoses from nonmedical use of drugs or alcohol while on the job increased by 32%.
- Fatalities in transportation and material-moving increased by 7% and accounted for more than a quarter of all job deaths.
- Workers aged 55 and over had 1,848 fatalities.

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Frostbite: Be aware! Quiz

1. Frostbite happens when your skin freezes from exposure to severe cold or contact with very cold objects. **True or False**
2. Nothing can prevent you from getting frostbite. **True or False**
3. What should you do to help someone with hypothermia?
 - A. Heat the skin quickly using hot water, a fireplace, or other high-heat sources.
 - B. Rub the frostbitten area to warm it.
 - C. Warm the affected body parts gradually with body heat.
4. You can prevent frostbite by wearing waterproof, insulated boots and warm socks. **True or False**
5. If your clothing becomes wet, you can wait until later to change into drier clothes. **True or False**

Answers

1. True. When frostbite occurs, your skin freezes, damaging your cells and blood vessels. The freezing point for skin is 30°F. **2. False.** There are measures you can take as precautions against frostbite. If you work in cold conditions, you can be exposed to the risk of frostbite. **3. C. Warm the affected body parts gradually with body heat.** Do not heat the body suddenly with heat sources or rub the frostbitten skin for any reason. These actions will cause more damage. **4. True.** Wear clothing and shoes that prevent your skin from having any access to the cold and dampness. **5. False.** If your clothing becomes wet, remove it, and change into dry clothing as soon as possible. Not doing so will put you at risk of frostbite.

Driving safely on winter roads

Winter is here, and with it comes icy, dicey winter roads. What can you do to keep yourself safe?

- Keep important safe driving tools in your car. See the *winter driving checklist* article from the December 2017 Safety issue.
- Always buckle up before driving.
- Check to make sure there are no car warning lights lit up on your dashboard.
- Test your brakes before you drive away. Pump them repeatedly, and stomp on them to initiate antilock braking. Occasionally, use your emergency brake when parking to keep it in good working condition.
- Clean all exterior lights to improve visibility.
- Keep windshield wiper blades clean to prevent streaking. Make sure your windshield washer reserve is full.
- Don't idle with the windows up or inside an enclosed space, like a garage.
- Always steer into—and not in the opposite direction of—a skid.
- Drive slowly, and increase your distance between cars on the road.
- Turn on your lights when driving in inclement weather.
- Get off the road to a safe place like a rest stop or turnout if weather conditions get bad enough that it is unsafe to continue your journey.
- If your car stalls or gets stuck, stay with your car; don't over exert yourself; put bright markers on your antenna or windows; and if you run your car, clear the exhaust pipe and run it just enough to stay warm.