Walk – In Cooler Hazards

WHAT'S AT STAKE?

Food safety is the reason for these cold areas, but they can be hazardous to your safety as a food service worker.

WHAT'S THE DANGER?

People can get trapped in walk-in refrigerators or freezers, and sometimes they die. Exposure to cold temperatures can cause hypothermia, a potentially fatal lowering of the body's core temperature. Or lack of oxygen could cause death before freezing does. Spending too long in a freezer, or being in continual contact with frozen items, can also cause frostbite. Amputation of fingers or toes is sometimes necessary after frostbite.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

Guidelines for working safely around cold rooms include:

- Check cold storage areas periodically throughout the shift and at closing time to make sure no one is trapped inside.
- Make sure doors can be opened from the inside. Inspect them regularly to make sure they work.
- Wear warm clothing when working in a cold storage area.
- Use insulated gloves when working with frozen foods.
- Use warm, non-slip footwear.
- Recognize that the fatigue caused by cold and heavy clothing can be a factor in injuries.
- You should also be aware that not everyone is suited for work in a cold room, such as someone with a heart condition.
- Keep floors free of slip hazards, and use non-slip mats.
- Take extra care when lifting objects in a cold room to prevent injuries.
- Use an anti-fog solution on your safety eyewear so you can see well in spite of changing temperatures. Be prepared for

your glasses to fog up

- Take your assigned rest breaks outside of the cold area. If possible, rotate from cold room work to less stressful conditions.

FINAL WORD

Hypothermia and amputation are the most serious dangers of being exposed to cold hazards in large cold rooms and freezers in industrial, healthcare and restaurant venues.