

Scaling for clothing will alter with role, policy and deployments, but adhering to the principles overleaf along with the concept of layering clothes to trap air, thus offering insulation, is a good start. It is particularly important to ensure DP are generally warm, otherwise the body's response to general cooling will make it impossible to keep hands and feet sufficiently warm.

Special attention should be paid to:

- **Hats and neck warmers:** a lot of heat is lost through the head and neck, so the use of these is of great value.
- **Gloves and mittens:** balancing warmth and thickness of gloves against dexterity is difficult, each person should make their own decision as to what best suits them and the task involved. Mittens are much more effective at keeping hands warm and may be useful when outdoors but not required to undertake dextrous tasks; they should be issued where possible.
- **Double layering of socks:** two pairs of socks are warmer than one, but only if boots are sufficiently large to accommodate this without feeling tight. Those requiring protection from cold may need permission to procure larger footwear.
- **Gaiters:** these can be very effective in protecting feet from cooling by preventing trousers and socks from becoming wet in deep grass and shallow water. SP requiring protection from the cold should wear gaiters in damp or wet conditions, WITHOUT FAIL.

A final overriding principle is that each person responds individually to the cold and so each person should be allowed to wear more or less clothing dependent on need; there should be NO requirement for everyone to wear the same kit.

In cases where an individual experiences symptoms upon minimal exposure such that activities are severely restricted, specialist advice should be sought from single service occupational health advisors.



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Ministry
of Defence

Commander's Guide

Employment of Defence Personnel
requiring protection from
cold environments

[JSP 375 Chapter 42 Annex F](#)



Defence personnel (DP) may need to be protected from cold to prevent a deterioration in their medical condition, most frequently non-freezing cold injury (NFCI). Such cases are usually indicated via their JMES and Medical Limitations/Appendix 9. This can pose problems for Commanders in deciding how best to employ and deploy them.

The aim of this guide is to provide a structure for decision making to enhance the effectiveness of DP who require protection from cold at work, whilst minimising their risk of further injury.

Can DP needing protection from the cold work outdoors?

Yes. However, certain factors must be taken into consideration and reasonable work adjustments may need to be made. The hierarchy of controls should be referred to and prioritised according to their diminishing effectiveness (see JSP 375 Chapter 42 Annex A); more than one measure may need to be implemented to adequately control exposure.

Factors to consider include:

Weather: Many commanders ask at what temperature DP may work outdoors when suffering from a cold condition. It is not possible to provide a definitive temperature at which it is safe to work outdoors as each person's response to cold is different, whether or not they are injured.

Outdoor work is thus not precluded at any temperature; protection from cold must be enough to prevent hand/foot cooling to the point of loss of feeling, which will vary from person to person. Where it is clear that conditions are likely to trigger the onset of symptoms, a common sense approach may be to excuse the individual from that activity.

Command should regularly check that the individual is warm (this can be hourly verbal checks) and there must be provision to remove from the cold environment within an hour if adverse symptoms are reported.



Management thereafter should be guided by the NFCI Field Assessment Tool (NFAT).

Activity: High risk activities include:

- those undertaken in wet and windy conditions
- remaining static for long periods
- handling metal objects, including weapons and tent poles
- remaining overnight in field conditions

Deployment: Deployments to cold environments are not necessarily precluded. Robust risk assessment must be undertaken and recorded, to include evidence for adequate protection from the cold as well as ready access to re-warming facilities if needed.

So, for example, employing a cold injured DP on sentry duty with a weapon in wet weather should be approached with caution, whereas allowing someone to go for a run in cold, dry weather, while wearing gloves and with sufficient layers to keep warm would be regarded as relatively safe.

How should cold exposure be monitored?

Appropriate monitoring of DP in a cold environment includes:

- Ensuring they are not becoming generally cold;
- Checking they are not developing cold-related symptoms in their hands or feet.

Should hands or feet become cold use the NFCI Field Assessment Tool (NFAT) to assess whether they should be re-warmed and assessed further.

If hands and feet are not cooling to the point of numbness then they will not incur further injury.

Defence is at high risk of personal injury claims from inappropriate exposure of DP to the cold, this can be avoided by careful monitoring and recording of activities and response to cold. For example, if a trial of guard duty is planned then:

- Check the DP has adequate PPE
- Use relatively short guard periods to start with and lengthen if there are no problems.
- Advise the DP to inform CoC immediately if they experience symptoms or start to become cold.
- Check temperature of hands and/or feet hourly (checking verbally is sufficient) – remove from duties and allow to re-warm if cold.
- Record monitoring and outcomes in the respective personnel file.

This approach can be followed for any activity. If an individual does inadvertently become particularly cold then please use the NFAT to assess and record their condition; further information is also available in the Guide to Hand and Foot Inspections.

What personal protective equipment (PPE) is advised?

The mainstay of care in NFCI and other cold related conditions is maintaining a normal body temperature; this reduces symptoms and avoids further injury from cold. Clothing and footwear should be adequate and appropriately worn; there may be a tendency for trends and custom to override the most effective use of PPE and this should be discouraged. Equal emphasis should be placed on:

- Waterproofing
- Wind-proofing
- Insulation (through layering)