**SUBJECT:** Hypothermia (Cold) Emergencies

**PURPOSE:** To clearly establish the Department’s position on the clinical care and treatment of patients suffering from a hypothermia related emergency.

**SCOPE:** This Operating Guideline shall be applicable to all personnel; paid and volunteer, operating as an agent of Shamong EMS

**RESPONSIBILITY:** All Department Officers will ensure overall compliance with this operating guideline. The primary responsibility of the emergency care and treatment of medical and trauma patients falls under Emergency Medical Technicians, paid and volunteer, operating as an agent of Shamong EMS

**PROCEDURE:**

1. **Assessment** 
   1. Perform complete primary and secondary assessment, including obtaining a complete set of manual vital signs.
   2. Assess Level of consciousness:
      1. MILD/MODERATE - Oriented or appear lethargic or have a dulled response.
      2. SEVERE - disoriented and/or confused progressing to unconsciousness.
   3. Assess for muscle responses:
      1. MILD/MODERATE - shivering is present.
      2. SEVERE - shivering is absent.
      3. MILD/MODERATE - muscle stiffness; stumbling or staggering gait.
      4. SEVERE - rigid muscles; complete lack of coordination.
   4. Assess heart rate
      1. Slow (Severe).
      2. Irregular (most common).
      3. Absent (SEVERE).
   5. Assess pulse and respirations frequently, for at least 1-2 minutes each.
   6. If environmental exposure is not the cause, look for other metabolic causes, such as, but not limited to:
      1. Hypothyroidism.
      2. Brain tumors/head injury.
      3. Acute Myocardial Infarction.
      4. Diabetes mellitus.
      5. Drug overdose.
2. **Treatment**
   1. In all cases of hypothermia:
      1. Provide and maintain airway management.
      2. Remove the patient from the cool environment to a warm one.
      3. Remove wet clothing.
      4. Protect against further heat loss by applying blankets.
      5. Maintain horizontal position.
      6. Avoid rough and excessive handling.
      7. Administer and maintain appropriate dose of oxygen based on patient’s condition.
         1. If available, apply warmed, humidified oxygen.
   2. The patient exhibits signs/symptoms of SEVERE HYPOTHERMIA do all of the above as well as:
      1. If available, apply heat packs to head, neck, chest, and groin
      2. Give nothing PO.
   3. If the patient is in cardiac arrest:
      1. Assess pulse and respirations for 1-2 minutes.
      2. Initiate CPR.
      3. Apply AED.
      4. Ventilate with warmed, humidified oxygen (if available).
3. **Documentation**
   1. All physical findings, including pertinent negatives
   2. Approx. Time of exposure and temperature of area exposed
   3. Complete SAMPLE history
   4. Treatment rendered
      1. Repeat vital signs
      2. Responses to treatment

**Enforcement**

Failed compliance with the policy and procedures outlined in this document may result in the employee’s entry to the department’s progressive counseling and discipline process.