

Tips to stay safe in the bitter cold

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RICHMOND, VA (WWBT) -

Some people have no choice but to brave the bitter cold. So as temperatures continue to fall, NBC 12 is on your side with what you need to know to stay healthy.

One of the factors school systems have to consider is whether or not it's appropriate for children to stand outside waiting for school buses during the bitter cold. But it's not just students who need to stay safe.

For many right now, public transportation is the best option to make it to their destination. We asked Damion Robinson how long he had been standing outside for a bus.

"About 15 minutes," he replied.

Each minute gets no easier.

"It's cold. It's cold," he said.

Many others aren't just waiting in it, they're working their 9 to 5.

"The average person is looking for the best opportunity to support their families and if it means working in the cold, if it means I get a better wage or benefits or healthcare for my family then I'm going to do it," said Malik Russell with New Virginia Majority.

He serves as a voice for the working class. Now he's asking those with outside jobs to take precautions - and for good reason.

"Since I've been on the phone with you, we've had 2 patients who have fallen. One had a broken ankle and one had a laceration," said Dr. Christopher Dietz who says icy roads are to blame.

So he has a recommendation.

"People are walking with their hands in their pockets and that's really dangerous if you're walking on a slick surface because you don't have any way of balancing yourself. Hands should be out because they work as a balancing mechanism so if you do start to slip you may be able to rescue yourself before you actually go down," he said.

Also monitor your hands and feet.

"If you start seeing areas that are gray or waxy or feel a burning or tingling in the area, you're on the cusp of developing frostbite," Dr. Dietz added.

Medical experts say if you find yourself in a situation like that, the first thing you should do is run your hands under warm water but do not rub them together. The friction can lead to tissue damage.

The tips can keep you safe when the cold outside is calling your name.

"A lot of them don't, they don't have a choice. That's just the nature of the beast," Russell said.

One more recommendation from doctors - stay hydrated. Your body sweats in the winter just as it does in the summer - especially when wearing layers - which is a must when it's this cold outside.

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