

Proper Wear of Duty Uniforms in Winter

By Specialist Jennifer Smith, 10th Mountain Division Journalist

Private Joe Snuffy awoke on an average morning and hurried outside to the first formation of the day dressed improperly for physical training (PT). Because he did not know that he could wear polypropylene underwear underneath the PT uniform, Snuffy experienced one of his coldest mornings in the North Country.

The North Country can be a dangerous place during the winter months, especially if a soldier's clothing knowledge and readiness levels are lower than they should be. Chances are if a soldier has been stationed at Fort Drum during a normal winter, then he or she has experienced the bone-chilling wind that cuts through the PT uniform when he or she failed to dress properly during negative-degree weather because it never crossed their mind.

Wearing polypros under the PT uniform is not the only permitted addition to the Army gray PT uniform during the winter months. Fort Drum pamphlet 600-5, *10th Mountain Division (LI) Basic Standards*, and Army Regulation 670-1, *Wear and Appearance of Army Uniform and Insignia*, outline the wear and appearance of both PT and field uniforms during the winter months. Additional cold-weather information can be found in Field Manual 31-70, *The Army's Cold Weather Manual*.

Insulate—Layer—Ventilation

The acronym COLD should be used when dressing for adverse weather.

Keep it Clean

Avoid Overheating

Wear it Loose and layered

Keep it Dry

extreme cold weather. However, proper wear of the ECWCS is essential for the clothing system to work correctly.

"Cold weather is a dangerous adversary," said Staff Sergeant James Vchulek, cold-weather-course instructor. "(The ECWCS) will work; you just have to learn

how to use it." Failure to use the ECWCS properly can result in various cold weather injuries. Many soldiers wear their ECWCS GORE-TEX® parka and bottoms over their battle-dress uniform, which is incorrect and should not be practiced as part of the complete ECWCS, according to Vchulek.

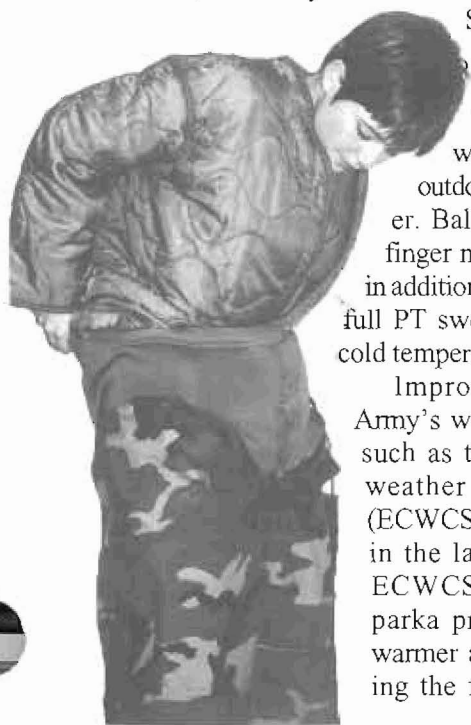
The ECWCS consists of polypros worn against the skin (no underwear), GORE-TEX® top and bottoms, the balaclava, trigger-finger mittens, and GORE-TEX® boots during moderately cold temperatures to prevent cold-weather injuries early in the season.

When the temperature drops, soldiers also may wear coat and trouser liners, pile cap, and ECW boots and mittens with the ECWCS. The cold-weather shirt (also known as the bear shirt) can be worn under the GORE-TEX® parka in extremely cold weather.

"(Wearing the proper uniform) is important to prevent the soldier from becoming a cold-weather casualty," said Staff Sgt. Donald McMillan, cold-weather-course instructor. Ensuring that equipment is serviceable and knowing the limitations of the equipment are also part of a soldier's responsibility to protect against the dangerous cold weather, according to McMillan.

When teaching Fort Drum's cold-weather course, Vchulek reiterates the proper use of the clothing system. "Learn how to use the ECWCS and use it correctly," he tells soldiers. "This is some great stuff."

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Soldiers may wear their black knit watch cap and black leather gloves with inserts during outdoor PT in cold weather. Balaclava and trigger-finger mittens can be worn in addition to polypros and the full PT sweat suit in extreme cold temperatures.

Improvements to the Army's winter field uniform, such as the extended cold-weather clothing system (ECWCS), have been made in the last few years. The ECWCS GORE-TEX® parka provides soldiers a warmer alternative to wearing the field jacket during