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Ohioans Urged to Take Precaution Against Cold Weather

Keeping Your Family & Your Neighbors Safe in Extreme Temperatures

COLUMBUS-- The Ohio Emergency Management Agency and the Ohio Departments of Health and Aging today urge Ohioans to take preventive action against the upcoming extreme cold-weather conditions. By preparing your home and car in advance for winter emergencies, and by observing safety precautions during times of extremely cold weather, you can reduce the risk of weather-related health problems.

The Ohio Emergency Management Agency has already contacted all local partners and is ready to assist in the event of any power outages.

Since December 24, the Ohio Department of Health has learned of 37 emergency room visits related to cold exposures, hypothermia or frost bite. They will continue to closely monitor similar visits over the next several days as well as emergency room visits due to carbon monoxide exposure.

Although staying indoors as much as possible can help reduce the risk of car crashes and falls on the ice, you may also face indoor hazards. Many homes will be too cold—either due to a power failure or because the heating system isn't adequate for the weather. When people must use space heaters and fireplaces to stay warm, the risk of household fires increases, as well as the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning.

Check on your neighbor:

- Ohioans are urged to check on their neighbors as temperatures across much of the state are expected to dip into the negative double-digits. Ohioans should get in touch with friends, family and loved ones, and help spread the word about how to stay safe in the extreme cold.
- Learn how to best help older Ohioans in your neighborhood with these [tips from the Ohio Department of Aging](#).

Follow these important steps to protect yourself, your family and your neighbors:

- Use fireplace, wood stoves, or other combustion heaters only if they are properly vented to the outside and do not leak flue gas into the indoor air space.
- Never use a charcoal or gas grill indoors—the fumes are deadly.

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- Never leave lit candles unattended.
- Keep as much heat as possible inside your home.
- Check the temperature in your home often during severely cold weather.
- Leave all water taps slightly open so they drip continuously.
- Eat well-balanced meals to help you stay warmer

If you must go outside:

- Dress warmly and stay dry.
- Wear a hat, scarf, and mittens.
- Avoid frostbite.
- If you have to do heavy outdoor chores, dress warmly and work slowly.
- Avoid walking on ice or getting wet.
- Notify friends and family where you will be before you go hiking, camping, or skiing.
- Avoid traveling on ice-covered roads, overpasses, and bridges if at all possible.
- If you are stranded, it is safest to stay in your car.

Be cautious about travel:

- Listen for radio or television reports of travel advisories issued by the National Weather Service.
- Do not travel in low visibility conditions.
- Avoid traveling on ice-covered roads, overpasses, and bridges if at all possible.
- If you must travel by car, use tire chains and take a mobile phone with you.
- If you must travel, let someone know your destination and when you expect to arrive. Ask them to notify authorities if you are late.
- Check and restock the winter emergency supplies in your car before you leave.
- Never pour water on your windshield to remove ice or snow; shattering may occur.
- Don't rely on a car to provide sufficient heat; the car may break down.
- Always carry additional warm clothing appropriate for the winter conditions.

Know the risks of extremely cold temperatures:

When exposed to cold temperatures, your body begins to lose heat faster than it can be produced. Prolonged exposure to cold will eventually use up your body's stored energy. The result is hypothermia, or abnormally low body temperature. Body temperature that is too low affects the brain, making the victim unable to think clearly or move well. This makes hypothermia particularly dangerous because a person may not know it is happening and won't be able to do anything about it.

Hypothermia is most likely at very cold temperatures, but it can occur even at cool temperatures (above 40°F) if a person becomes chilled from rain, sweat, or submersion in cold water. Frostbite is an injury to the body that is caused by freezing. Frostbite causes a loss of feeling and color in affected areas. It most often affects the nose, ears, cheeks, chin, fingers, or toes. Frostbite can permanently damage the body, and severe cases can lead to amputation. The risk of frostbite is increased in people with reduced blood circulation and among people who are not dressed properly for extremely cold temperatures.