



NEWS from SEMO

NEW YORK STATE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT OFFICE
1220 Washington Avenue, Building 22, Suite 101, Albany, NY 12226-2251

David A. Paterson, Governor

John R. Gibb, Director

Media Contact:
Dennis Michalski
(518) 292-2310
CA@semo.state.ny.us

FOR RELEASE:
IMMEDIATE, Tuesday
January 13, 2008

SEMO OFFERS EXTREME COLD WEATHER SAFETY TIPS

With arctic-like temperatures and oppressive wind chills forecast to hover over the State tonight through Saturday, the New York State Emergency Management Office urges New Yorkers to follow these safety tips to protect themselves, their families and their loved ones from freezing conditions.

Sub-zero conditions over several days can cause problems such as frozen water pipes and even dangerous situations, especially when care is not taken with heating equipment such as alternative heating sources such as woodstoves, fireplaces and kerosene heaters. Fire hazards are greatly increased in the winter because alternate heating sources often are used without following proper safety precautions.

Minimize outside activities, particularly the elderly and the very young. Also, don't forget to take care of your pets.

Check on neighbors, especially those who are elderly, physically handicapped or infirmed.

Pay attention to the news for official, up-to-date information on weather conditions. The best way to receive emergency information is by subscribing to NY-ALERT, the State's alert and notification system, at www.nyalert.gov.

Dress appropriately by wearing loose, lightweight, warm clothing in several layers. Outer garments should be tightly woven, water repellent and hooded. Always wear a hat or cap on your head. Cover your mouth with a scarf to protect your lungs from extreme cold. Mittens, snug at the wrist, are better than gloves because fingers maintain more warmth when they touch each other.

Hypothermia is caused by prolonged exposure to cold temperatures, especially in children and the elderly. Watch for the following symptoms: inability to concentrate, poor coordination, slurred speech, drowsiness, exhaustion, and/or uncontrollable shivering, following by a sudden lack of shivering. If a person's body temperature drops below 95 degrees Fahrenheit, get emergency medical assistance immediately. Remove wet clothing, wrap the victim in warm blankets, and give warm, non-alcoholic, non-caffeinated liquids until help arrives.

- more -

Frostbite can occur when working or playing outdoors during the winter. In the early stages of frostbite, there is no pain. Watch for danger signs: skin may feel numb and become flushed, and then turn white or grayish-yellow; frostbitten skin feels cold to the touch. If frostbite is suspected, move the victim to a warm area. Cover the affected area with something warm and dry. Never rub it! Get to a doctor or hospital as quickly as possible.

Prevent pipes from freezing by turning on both hot and cold water faucets slightly, preferably in a basement sink – running water will not freeze as quickly. Open cabinet doors to allow more heat to get to non-insulated pipes under a sink or appliance near an outer wall. If you plan to leave your residence, drain and shut off the water system (except indoor sprinkler systems).

If your pipes burst, make sure you and your family knows how to shut off the water. Stopping water flow minimizes damage to your home. Call a plumber and contact your insurance agent. Never try to thaw a pipe with an open flame or torch. Always be careful of the potential for electric shock in and around standing water.

If you should lose power, turn off or unplug lights and appliances to prevent a circuit overload when service is restored. Leave one light on to indicate power has been restored. Make sure fuel space heaters are used with proper ventilation. Keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible to help reduce food spoilage.

Carbon monoxide poisoning is a silent, deadly killer claiming about 1,000 lives each year in the United States. Such common items as automotive exhaust, home heating systems and obstructed chimneys can produce the colorless, odorless gas. The gas can also be produced by poorly vented generators, kerosene heaters, gas grills and other items used for cooking and heating when used improperly during the winter months. Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning include sleepiness, headaches and dizziness. If you suspect carbon monoxide poisoning, ventilate the area and get to a hospital immediately.

When using a generator, never run it indoors. Deadly carbon monoxide gas from the generators exhaust can spread throughout enclosed spaces. Run generators outside, downwind of structures. Install a carbon monoxide detector. Keep children away from generators at all times.

When using a kerosene heater, follow the manufacturers' instructions. Use only the correct fuel for your unit. Refuel outdoors only when the unit is cool. When using the heater, use fire safeguards and ventilate properly.

Stock up on emergency supplies, including flashlights, a portable, battery-operated radio, extra batteries, bottled water, non-perishable food, and a first aid kit.

Make sure your automobile is properly winterized. Keep the gas tank at least half-full. Keep the following items in your car: blankets, extra clothing, flashlight, spare batteries, windshield scraper, shovel, towrope, and jumper cables.

#####