Health Department Urges Caution During Winter Storm

A winter storm warning is in effect for the Springfield-Greene County area beginning today at 6 pm. Heavy snow and cold weather are expected. The Springfield-Greene County Health Department would like to remind people that cold weather and precipitation can create health and safety risks. Reduce the risk of injury and keep yourself and your loved ones safe by taking time to prepare for these winter weather conditions.

- Be safe while outdoors in winter elements. Avoid ice covered walkways due to risk of falling. To avoid falling, wear snow boots, take short steps and use hand rails for balance, when possible.
- Prepare an emergency kit in case you become stranded in your vehicle, cover your body with extra clothing and remain in your vehicle. (www.dhss.mo.gov/emergencies/readyin3/englishfacts/IceSnowStorm.pdf)
- Avoid driving, if possible. If necessary, drive with caution and avoid travelling on ice-covered roads, overpasses and bridges. Most injuries and deaths related to winter storms occur from vehicle or transportation related accidents.
- Limit outdoor time during extreme cold temperatures and monitor for signs of frostbite or hypothermia. Layer clothing with loose-fitting lightweight items. Dress warm and stay dry. Wear a hat, scarf and mittens.
- Know the warning signs for hypothermia, an abnormally low body temperature. Continued exposure to cold temperatures can cause confusion, drowsiness, clumsiness, and exhaustion. Do not ignore shivering. Shivering is a sign that the body is losing heat. If shivering persists, go indoors.
- Know the signs and symptoms for frostbite, or injury to the body caused by freezing. Frostbite mostly affects the nose, ears, cheeks, chin, fingers and toes. Signs include tingling and numbness, white or grayish yellow areas of skin, and skin that feels waxy.
- Tasks such as shoveling snow, pushing stranded vehicles or even walking can cause exhaustion and overexertion leading to heart attacks. Close attention to physical health, weather conditions and the stress associated with the task should be considered prior to performing such tasks.
- Practice proper fire safety precautions: never leave a fire unattended; use space heaters according to manufacturer's instructions, and ensure your home is protected with a working smoke detector.
- Check on family, friends and neighbors that could be at high risk of cold related injury or illness including elderly, those that are fighting an illness and people that do not have access to adequate heat.
- Provide proper shelter for pets. If pets or livestock must remain outdoors, provide fresh water and food supplies on a regular basis.
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