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Extreme Cold – What you need to know and how to prepare

The Cayuga County Health Department and Cayuga County Office of Emergency Services are strongly encouraging residents take precautions over the next few days as extremely cold temperatures arrives later today, Wednesday, January 30, 2019. Wind chill is how wind and cold feel on exposed skin. The colder the temperature and stronger the wind, the quicker frostbite could set in on exposed skin. Local wind chills are expected to be between -15 and -30 degrees Fahrenheit.

Please take extra precautions with young children, the elderly and pets.

What you need to know and how you need to prepare:

Frostbite is damage caused to exposed skin during extreme cold.

- A wind chill of -20°F will cause frostbite in just 30 minutes.
- Symptoms of frostbite include:
 - Any discoloration of the skin such as flushed, white, yellow, or blue depending on the length of exposure
 - Waxy appearance of skin
 - Lack of feeling or numbness

If you are experiencing signs and symptoms of frostbite you should seek warm shelter, do not rub skin and seek medical attention.

Hypothermia is a condition when the body temperature drops less than 95 degrees Fahrenheit, which can occur during exposure to a cold environment and it can be fatal. Warning signs of hypothermia are:

- Shivering
- Confusion
- Disorientation
- Memory loss
- Slurred speech
- Drowsiness
- Exhaustion

If you recognize the above signs and symptoms in yourself or others, seek medical help immediately. Remove all wet/cold clothing and place the individual in dry blankets/clothing. If conscious, provide a warm beverage, avoiding alcohol and caffeine. .

General Safety Tips During Cold Weather:

- Check on your elderly neighbors.
- Bring pets indoors.
- Stay indoors yourself, if possible.
- Do not drink alcoholic beverages, which cause the body to lose heat more rapidly.
- Do not ignore shivering—it is an important first sign that the body is losing heat and a signal to quickly return indoors.

When going outdoors, adults and children should wear:

- Several layers of loose-fitting clothing.
- A wind and water-resistant coat.
- A scarf to cover their face and mouth, hat, and gloves or mittens.
- Insulated waterproof boots.

General tips for staying safe while indoors:

- If you have a fireplace or woodstove, make sure you have a good supply of firewood.
- If your heat source stops working or there is a power outage, be very careful when using a secondary source of heat like a space heater. Secondary sources of heat increase the chances for carbon monoxide poisoning and fires.
- In the event of a power outage, make sure you have a flashlight with extra batteries.
- Prevent pipes from freezing by:
 - Keeping thermostat set to the same temperature at night and during the day.
 - Closing garage doors if water supply lines are in the garage.
 - Make sure pipes are properly insulated.
 - Open kitchen and bathroom cabinet doors to allow warm air around the plumbing.
 - Allow for water trickle out of faucets, preventing pipes from bursting.

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