



Department of
Developmental Disabilities

Office of MUI/Registry Unit

John R. Kasich, Governor
John L. Martin, Director

Health & Safety Alert #52-11-11

Winter Weather Alert

When winter temperatures drop significantly, staying warm and safe can be a real challenge. Here are some helpful hints to stay warm and healthy during the cold winter months.

Always wear the following to avoid cold related complications:

- Dress in layers of loose, dry clothing.
- Be sure to have a heavy winter or water/wind resistant coat and boots.
- Be sure to cover hands, feet, face, nose, and head very well. A warm hat (hood is critical as up to 40 percent of the body's heat is lost if your head isn't covered).
- Wear a hat, scarf, and mittens/gloves

When exposure to cold weather occurs for long periods, health emergencies can occur.

Hypothermia

When exposed to cold temperatures, your body begins to lose heat faster than it can be produced. Prolonged exposure to the 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 to occur at very cold temperatures, but it can occur even at cool temperatures (above 40 degrees Fahrenheit) if a person becomes chilled from rain, sweat, or submersion in cold water.

What to do:

If you notice any of these signs, take the person's temperature. If it is below 95 degrees, the situation is an emergency; get medical attention immediately.

If medical care is not available, begin warming the person, as follows:

- Get the victim into a warm room or shelter.
- If the victim has on any wet clothing, remove it.
- Warm the center of the body first: chest, neck, head and groin; using an electric blanket, if available. Or use skin-to-skin contact under loose, dry layers of blankets, clothing, towels, or sheets.
- Warm beverages can help increase the body temperature, but do not give alcoholic beverages. Do not try to give beverages to an unconscious person.
- After body temperature has increased, keep the person dry and wrapped in a warm blanket, including the head and neck.
- Get medical attention as soon as possible.

A person with severe hypothermia may be unconscious and may not seem to have a pulse or to be breathing. In this case, handle the victim gently and get emergency assistance (911) immediately. Even if the victim appears dead, CPR should be provided. CPR should continue while the victim is being warmed, until the victim responds or medical aid becomes available. In some cases, hypothermia victims who appear to be dead can be successfully resuscitated.

Frostbite

This is an injury to the body caused by exposure to cold temperatures. At the first sign of redness or pain in any skin area get out of the cold and protect any exposed skin.

Signs/Symptoms of frostbite include:

- A white grayish-yellow skin color
- Skin that feels unusually firm or waxy
- Numbness

What to do:

If you detect symptoms of frostbite, seek medical care immediately.

If (1) there is frostbite but no sign of hypothermia and (2) immediate medical care is not available, proceed as follows:

- Get into a warm room as soon as possible.
- Unless absolutely necessary, do not walk on frostbitten feet or toes; this increases the damage.
- Immerse the affected area in warm, not hot, water (the temperature should be comfortable to the touch for unaffected parts of the body).
- Or, warm the affected area using body heat. For example, the heat of an armpit can be used to warm frostbitten fingers.
- Do not rub the frostbitten area with snow or massage it at all. This can cause more damage.

- Don't use a heating pad, heat lamp, or the heat of a stove, fireplace, or radiator for warming. Affected areas are numb and can be easily burned.

Winter Weather Precautions

- Avoid going outside without proper clothing including hats and gloves.
- Don't stay outdoors too long in the extreme cold.
- Make sure individuals are well supervised so accidental exposure to extreme temperatures is avoided.
- Understand first aid for Frostbite and Hypothermia so immediate attention can be given in an emergency situation.
- Prepare in advance when conducting outdoor activities and trips. Take along extra clothing, blankets, warm liquids, etc.
- Be very careful with any heating elements. (Space heaters, fireplaces, furnaces, etc.) Assure that all are in good working order before being used for the winter.
- Avoid walking on frozen ponds or lakes unless the ice has been checked and is safe.

For questions or comments regarding the above Alert, please contact the MUI/Registry Unit at (614) 995-3810.

RE-ISSUED: November 2011

**Please find attached a Winter Awareness correspondence from the Ohio Committee for Severe Weather Awareness.*



Governor John R. Kasich

American Red Cross
Emergency Management Association of Ohio
Hands On, Central Ohio
National Weather Service
Ohio Department of Aging
Ohio Department of Commerce-State Fire Marshal
Ohio Department of Education

Ohio Department of Health
Ohio Department of Insurance
Ohio Department of Natural Resources
Ohio Department of Public Safety -Ohio EMA
Ohio Department of Transportation
Ohio Insurance Institute
Ohio News Network

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 9, 2011

Contact: Kelli Blackwell, Ohio EMA, 614-799-3694

Don't Get Caught in the Cold – Get Ready for Winter
Winter Safety Awareness Week is November 13-19

Columbus, OH – A freak October snowstorm that dumped up to 32 inches of snow on the New England states two weeks ago was responsible for 29 deaths and caused power outages to 2 million people. Ohio hasn't seen snow yet this season, but with overnight temperatures dipping in the 30s, and chilly, frosty mornings, we know that winter is on its way. The Ohio Committee for Severe Weather Awareness (OCSWA) encourages everyone to take the time now to prepare themselves and their homes for the upcoming season.

In a coordinated effort with OCSWA, Governor John R. Kasich has proclaimed November 13-19 as Ohio's Winter Safety Awareness Week. This is an ideal time for homes, schools, businesses and organizations to update their safety plans and disaster supply kits and prepare for winter-related incidents.

“Don't let winter catch you off-guard. Winterize your homes and vehicles now, before the first major snowfall hits,” said Nancy Dragani, executive director of the Ohio Emergency Management Agency. “Heavy snow and ice can bring down power lines for days. So, get ready now, just in case. Ensure your smoke and carbon monoxide detectors are working. Ensure you have enough stored food and water to supply your family for several days. Review your emergency plans. Purchase a NOAA Weather Radio to be notified of storm watches and warnings in your area.”

To help prepare for the upcoming winter months, OCSWA recommends the following:

Prepare your home for winter. Cut and remove low-hanging and dead tree branches. Ice, snow and strong winds can cause tree limbs to break and fall. Have your gutters cleaned. Snow and ice can build up quickly if gutters are clogged with debris. Have auxiliary heaters, furnaces and fireplaces maintenance checked or serviced before using. If using a portable generator, read instructions thoroughly to guard against carbon monoxide poisoning. Review your homeowner's insurance policy; consider your need for flood insurance.

Prepare winter disaster kits for the home and vehicle. Refresh stored nonperishable foods and bottled water. Change the batteries in your smoke detectors, carbon monoxide detectors and radios. Winter emergency kits should include warm clothing, blankets, flashlights, new batteries, coats, hats, gloves, a battery-operated or hand-cranked radio, first aid kit, and enough nonperishable food and water (one gallon per person, per day) to sustain each family member for at least three days. Have stored food, bottled water and supplies for your pets, as well.

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“Teaching Ohioans Severe Weather Safety and Preparedness”

www.weathersafety.ohio.gov

Invest in a NOAA Public Alert/Weather Radio. Every home, school and business should have a tone-alert weather radio with a battery back-up. Weather and public alert radios are programmed to automatically sound an alert during public safety and severe weather events. Click on www.weather.gov/nwr/ for additional information.

Update your disaster preparedness plans. Every home, school, business and organization should have written plans for the different types of disasters that can occur. Review the plans with the entire family or staff. Everyone should know what to do in the event of a snow or ice storm, a prolonged power outage, a flood or fire. Post contact information for your local emergency management agency. Prepare and practice drills that require sheltering in place and evacuation. Update your emergency contact list and establish a meeting place outside of the home, school or business, where others will know where to find or meet you.

The Ohio Committee for Severe Weather Awareness is an advocate for emergency preparedness and is comprised of representatives from the American Red Cross; Emergency Management Association of Ohio; National Weather Service; Hands On, Central Ohio; Ohio Department of Public Safety-Emergency Management Agency; Ohio Insurance Institute; Ohio News Network; Ohio Department of Commerce – State Fire Marshal; and the Ohio Departments of Aging, Education, Health, Insurance, Natural Resources, and Transportation.

For additional information on winter weather safety and severe weather preparedness, visit OCSWA's site at www.weathersafety.ohio.gov.

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