

NEWS RELEASE

Public Health - Madison & Dane County

(PHMDC)

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Bitterly Cold Arctic Air Creates Serious Safety Concerns

Information and Tips on How to Stay Safe

Madison WI - February 19, 2015 - Extremely cold temperature and wind-chill factors over the last few have created extremely dangerous situations across a major portion of the eastern half of the country. While locally daytime temperatures are predicted to moderate slightly over the next few days, sub-zero nighttime temperatures are expected to persist well into next week.

Public Health-Madison and Dane County (PHMDC) strongly urges people to stay alert and aware of these dangerous conditions. These conditions can produce frostbite and hypothermia in as few as 10 minutes. Signs and symptoms of frostbite include the loss of feeling and color in parts of the body. Signs and symptoms of hypothermia include uncontrollable shivering, feelings of numbness, drowsiness, exhaustion, confusion, memory lapses, slow or slurred speech, slow breathing and pulse rates, failing eyesight, poor coordination and possible unconsciousness. If you are experiencing these symptoms, you should seek immediate emergency medical assistance.

Following are some safety measures you can take to minimize the potential serious health impacts of the extreme cold:

- Check on loved ones and neighbors, especially those in fragile health, preferably by telephone. Pay particular attention to older neighbors who may be outdoors attempting to shovel snow or engaged in some other activity that might be putting them at risk.
- Monitor your food intake and physical output and maintain a regular diet to help your body better handle the severe weather conditions.
- Hydrate - Water is usually the best choice. Drinks with caffeine, sugar and alcohol take longer for your body to absorb and do not hydrate as well.
- People should be aware of the amount and intensity of their physical activity, both indoors and out. Avoid overexertion. Cold weather puts additional strain on the body, especially the heart.
- If you have to go outside, be sure to wear appropriate clothing that will adequately insulate you from the cold and provide protection from the wind.
- Older adults, those in fragile health and smaller children can be more readily affected by the cold than the average adult.
- **Never** leave children or pets alone in vehicles. Temperatures in vehicles can drop rapidly.
- Pets can be greatly affected by the cold and should not be exposed longer than they have to be.
- Large animals need to be kept out of the wind and have a dry place to lie down. Water supplies should be checked to avoid freezing and diets should be adjusted to increase energy content by 5%.
- Make sure that all heating units are operating properly. Poorly operating or damaged heating units can release carbon monoxide gas. Make sure that you have carbon monoxide detectors installed and assure that they are functioning properly, including checking on the status of their batteries.

These extreme weather conditions create special challenges for the homeless. For a listing of resources, and special actions being taken by service providers this week, please visit the Dane County Homeless Services Consortium at www.danecountyhomeless.org

For additional information regarding winter weather and forecast details visit the National Weather Service's Milwaukee / Sullivan Forecast Office at

http://www.crh.noaa.gov/news/display_cmsstory.php?wfo=mkx&storyid=106816&source=0

For additional information on winter weather health and safety guidance, visit the CDC page on cold stress at <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/coldstress/>

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An online version of this release is available at

<http://www.cityofmadison.com/news/bitterly-cold-arctic-air-creates-serious-safety-concerns>