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MEMA OFFERS PRECAUTIONS FOR EXTREME COLD WEATHER

FRAMINGHAM, MA – Dangerously low temperatures are forecasted for this weekend. “MEMA is urging residents to take precautions during this period of extreme cold weather. Stay indoors if you can. If you must go outside, dress in layers and make sure your car is equipped with cold weather gear and an emergency kit” stated Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) Director Kurt Schwartz. “Remember to check on your family, the elderly, or others with access and functional needs to make sure they are safe.”

Prolonged exposure to the cold can lead to serious health issues including frostbite and in extreme cases, hypothermia. Therefore, MEMA urges residents to minimize outside activities. If you must go outside, follow these safety tips:

- Dress in several layers of loose-fitting, lightweight clothing, rather than a single layer of heavy clothing. Wear a hat, mittens (rather than gloves) and sturdy waterproof boots, protecting your extremities, and cover your mouth with a scarf to protect your lungs.
- Watch for signs of frostbite and hypothermia.
 - Frostbite causes a loss of feeling and a pale appearance in extremities, such as fingers, toes, ear lobes or the tip of the nose. If symptoms are detected, seek medical help immediately.
 - The warning signs of hypothermia include uncontrollable shivering, memory loss, disorientation, incoherence, slurred speech, drowsiness and apparent exhaustion. If the person’s temperature drops below 95 degrees, seek immediate medical care.
- Have a well-stocked home [Emergency Kit](#) that includes a flashlight, sleeping bag or blanket, portable radio, extra batteries, a first aid kit, bottled water and non-perishable food.
- Make sure your car is properly winterized. Keep the gas tank at least half-full. Carry a [Winter Emergency Car Kit](#) including blankets, extra clothing, a flashlight with spare batteries, a can, waterproof matches (to melt snow for drinking water), non-perishable foods, windshields scraper, shovel, sand, towrope, and jumper cables in the trunk.
- Be a good neighbor. Check with elderly or disabled relatives and neighbors to ensure their safety.

- Limit outdoor time for your [pets](#). Freezing temperatures are dangerous to animals as well as humans.

Ensure you have sufficient heating fuel, as well as alternate emergency heating equipment in case you lose electricity. When utilizing alternate heating sources, such as an emergency generator, your fireplace, wood stove, or space heater, take necessary safety precautions:

- Keep a fire extinguisher handy and ensure everyone knows how to use it properly.
- Never heat your home with a gas stove or oven or charcoal barbecue grill.
- Make sure all heating devices are properly ventilated and always operate a generator outdoors and away from your home. Improper heating devices can lead to dangerous carbon monoxide (CO) buildup in the home. Make sure you test smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors. Carbon monoxide is an odorless, colorless gas that can cause flulike illness or death. If you suspect carbon monoxide poisoning, call 911 immediately, get the victim to fresh air, and open windows.

If you do not have an alternate heating source, trap the existing heat by sealing off unused rooms by stuffing towels in the cracks under the doors. At night, cover windows with extra blankets or sheets. Wrap pipes in insulation or layers of newspapers covered with plastic to keep them from freezing. Allow a trickle of warm water to run from a faucet that is farthest from your water meter or one that has frozen in the past. This will keep the water moving so that it cannot freeze. If pipes freeze, remove insulation, completely open all faucets and pour hot water over the pipes or wrap them with towels soaked in hot water, starting where they are most exposed to the cold. A hand-held hair dryer, used with caution, also works well.

If you need information on the location of open warming centers or shelters check with local authorities or call 2-1-1.

For additional information about MEMA and Winter Preparedness, go to www.mass.gov/mema.

MEMA is the state agency charged with ensuring the state is prepared to withstand, respond to, and recover from all types of emergencies and disasters, including natural hazards, accidents, deliberate attacks, and technological and infrastructure failures. MEMA's staff of professional planners, communications specialists and operations and support personnel is committed to an all hazards approach to emergency management. By building and sustaining effective partnerships with federal, state and local government agencies, and with the private sector - individuals, families, non-profits and businesses - MEMA ensures the Commonwealth's ability to rapidly recover from large and small disasters by assessing and mitigating threats and hazards, enhancing preparedness, ensuring effective response, and strengthening our capacity to rebuild and recover.

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