

MEMA OFFERS PRECAUTIONS FOR EXTREME COLD WEATHER

FRAMINGHAM, MA – “With the forecast of extremely cold temperatures and severe wind chill over the next few days, the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) is presenting these cold weather safety tips,” stated MEMA Director Kurt Schwartz.

- -Continue to be aware of the timing of extreme weather conditions by monitoring Media reports.
- -Make sure you always have a well-stocked Winter Home Emergency Supply Kit that includes flashlights, portable radio, extra batteries, a first aid kit, bottled water, non-perishable food, a manual can opener, and extra heavy blankets.
- -Minimize outside activities, particularly the elderly and very young. Also, consider your pets.
- -Dress in several layers of loose-fitting, lightweight clothing, rather than a single layer of heavy clothing. Outer garments should be tightly woven and water-repellent. Wear a hat, mittens and sturdy waterproof boots, protecting your extremities. Cover your mouth with a scarf to protect your lungs.
- -Excessive exposure can lead to frostbite, which is damaging to body tissue that is frozen. 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.
- -Hypothermia can occur in extreme cases. The warning signs are 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.
- -Ensure you have sufficient heating fuel, as well as emergency heating equipment in case you lose electricity. Remember that unvented kerosene heaters are illegal in Massachusetts.
- -*Call Mass211 or check with your local Emergency Management Office to find the locations of any Warming Centers that may be open in your community.

When utilizing alternate heating sources, such as your fireplace, wood stove, space heater or a generator, take the necessary safety precautions.

- -Keep the heat sources 3-feet away from anything that can catch fire. Turn off space heaters when going to bed or leaving the house.
- -Keep a fire extinguisher handy; ensuring everyone knows how to use it properly. Test smoke alarms and carbon monoxide (CO) detectors.
- -If you lose your heat, seal off unused rooms by stuffing towels in the cracks under the doors. At night, cover windows with extra blankets or sheets.
- -Food provides the body with energy for producing its own heat.
- -Be a good neighbor. Check with elderly or relatives and friends who may need additional assistance to ensure their safety.

To keep pipes from freezing, wrap them in insulation or layers of newspapers, covering the newspapers with plastic to keep out moisture. 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. Learn how to shut off your water if a pipe bursts.

- -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.
- -Open kitchen and bathroom cabinet doors to allow warmer air to circulate around the plumbing. Be sure to move any harmful cleaners and household chemicals up out of the reach of children.

- -Keep the thermostat set to the same temperature both during the day and at night. By temporarily suspending the use of lower nighttime temperatures, you may incur a higher heating bill, but you can prevent a much more costly repair job if pipes freeze and burst.

Make sure your car is properly winterized. Keep the gas tank at least half-full. Carry a Winter Emergency Car Kit in the trunk including blankets, extra clothing, flashlight with spare batteries, a can and waterproof matches (to melt snow for drinking water), non-perishable foods, windshields scraper, shovel, sand, towrope and jumper cables.

The Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) is the state agency responsible for coordinating federal, state, local, voluntary and private resources during emergencies and disasters in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. MEMA provides leadership to: develop plans for effective response to all hazards, disasters or threats; train emergency personnel to protect the public; provide information to the citizenry; and assist individuals, families, businesses and communities to mitigate against, prepare for, and respond to and recover from emergencies, both natural and man made. For additional information about MEMA and Winter Preparedness, go to www.mass.gov/mema. Also, continue to follow MEMA updates on *Twitter* at www.twitter.com/MassEMA; *Facebook* at www.facebook.com/MassachusettsEMA. Download the free *ping4alert!* app to your Smartphone to receive important weather alerts and emergency messages from MEMA. Easy instructions are available at www.mass.gov/mema/mobileapp.