

Cold Weather Reminders from Red Cross

Frigid air is predicted for most of the area, and the American Red Cross has steps people can take to stay safe during this hazardous weather.

“This extreme cold can be dangerous but there are ways to combat it,” said Jill Orton, Region Executive. “We want everyone to know how to safely ride out these winter conditions.”

COLD WEATHER SAFETY TIPS Here are ten ways to stay safe during this latest round of cold temperatures:

1. Wear layers of lightweight clothing to stay warm. Gloves and a hat will help prevent losing body heat.
2. Know the signs of hypothermia - confusion, dizziness, exhaustion and severe shivering. If someone has these symptoms, they should get immediate medical attention.
3. Watch for symptoms of frostbite including numbness, flushed gray, white, blue or yellow skin discoloration, numbness or waxy feeling skin.
4. Bring the pets indoors. If that's not possible, make sure they have enough shelter to keep them warm and that they can get to unfrozen water.
5. Avoid frozen pipes - run water, even at a trickle, to help prevent them from freezing. Keep the thermostat at the same temperature day and night to help avoid freezing pipes.

In addition, when temperatures drop, people often find alternate heating sources to stay warm. “Heating fires are the second leading cause of home fires in the United States and sadly seven times a day, these fires are fatal,” said Orton.

HOME FIRES CAN BE DEADLY The Red Cross has launched a nationwide campaign to reduce the number of home fire deaths and injuries by 25 percent over the next five years. Teaming up with local fire departments and community groups, the Red Cross is installing smoke alarms and teaching people how to prevent fires in places where a high number of fires have occurred.

Heating one's home through the winter can be expensive. Because of the cost, almost half of the families in the United States use alternate heating sources such as space heaters, fireplaces, or coal or wood stoves to stay warm. These supplemental heating sources can be dangerous if not used properly. The Red Cross urges everyone to use caution when using alternate heat sources to heat their home and offers the following safety tips on how to prevent fires:

- * Keep all potential sources of fuel like paper, clothing, bedding, curtains or rugs at least three feet away from space heaters, stoves, or fireplaces.
- * Portable heaters and fireplaces should never be left unattended. Turn off space heaters and make sure any embers in the fireplace are extinguished before going to bed or leaving home.
- * If you must use a space heater, place it on a level, hard and nonflammable surface (such as ceramic tile floor), not on rugs or carpets or near bedding or drapes. Keep children and pets away from space heaters.
- * When buying a space heater, look for models that shut off automatically if the heater falls over as another safety measure.

- * Never use a cooking range or oven to heat your home.
- * Keep fire in your fireplace by using a glass or metal fire screen large enough to catch sparks and rolling logs.
- * Have wood and coal stoves, fireplaces, chimneys, and furnaces professionally inspected and cleaned once a year.

TWO LIFE-SAVING STEPS As part of the nationwide campaign, the Red Cross is asking every household in America to take two simple steps that can save lives: check their existing smoke alarms and practice fire drills at home. Planning for fire emergencies is important. Make sure all household members know two ways to escape from every room of your home, and set up a meeting place outside in case of fire. Practice escaping from your home at least twice a year and at different times of the day. Teach household members to stop, drop and roll if their clothing should catch on fire.

Smoke alarms save lives. You should:

- * Install smoke alarms on every level of your home, inside bedrooms and outside sleeping areas.
- * Check monthly that smoke alarms are working properly by pushing the test button.
- * Replace batteries in smoke alarms at least once a year.
- * Replace smoke alarms every ten years. For more information about fire safety and steps you can take to be ready, visit the preparedness information on our web site.

Learn how to treat cold weather related emergencies by downloading the free Red Cross First Aid App at redcross.org/apps. More information about winter safety is available on redcross.org.

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