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DOH-SEMINOLE CAUTIONS RESIDENTS TO PREPARE FOR COLD WEATHER



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Sanford, Fla. — The Florida Department of Health in Seminole County (DOH-Seminole) urges residents to stay safe during freezing temperatures and wind chills. The National Weather Service reports extreme cold weather for this week through most of Central Florida. Visit www.prepareseminole.com for cold weather resources and shelter information.

“Taking safety precautions during cold weather is very important to prevent hypothermia, or abnormally low body temperature. Wearing proper clothing, heating your home safely, staying indoors and visiting available relief centers within the county when you need to remove yourself from the cold weather are some of the precautions you can take to stay warm,” said Donna Walsh, health officer for the Florida Department of Health in Seminole County.

Hypothermia is most likely at very cold temperatures, but it can occur even at cool temperatures (above 40°F) if a person becomes chilled from rain, sweat, or submersion in cold water. Victims of hypothermia are often (1) elderly people with inadequate food, clothing, or heating; (2) babies sleeping in cold bedrooms; (3) people who remain outdoors for long periods - the homeless, hikers, hunters, etc.; and (4) people who drink alcohol or use illicit drugs.

Floridians should remember the **"Five P's"** of cold weather safety which are: **Protecting People, Protecting Plants, Protecting Pets, Protecting Exposed Pipes, and Practicing Fire Safety.** To stay healthy and safe during cold weather, remember these safety tips:

- ✓ Stay indoors as much as possible to keep healthy, safe and warm. Make sure to check on friends, family members and neighbors who are especially at risk from cold weather hazards: young children, older adults, and the chronically ill.
- ✓ When outdoors, stay dry and wear multiple layers of loose-fitting clothing. Don't forget to wear a hat, scarf and mittens, or other winter gear.
- ✓ Heat your home safely. If you plan to use a wood stove, fireplace, or space heater, be extremely careful. Make sure each appliance is properly adjusted and you have followed the manufacturer's instructions and local building codes for use.
 - Plug space heaters directly into wall outlets. Use of extension cords may lead to circuit overload and cause a fire.

- Keep space heaters away from drapery, furniture or other flammable material. A good rule of thumb is to keep space heaters at least 36 inches from anything flammable.
- Do not leave space heaters unattended.
- Do not use a stove or oven as a heat source. An open oven door or lit stove burners can be dangerous and are ineffective as a heat source.
- Candles are unsafe and ineffective as a heat source. Never leave candles lit in an unattended room or when going to sleep.
- When using a fireplace, make sure it is properly vented and that the chimney is cleaned periodically to avoid flash fires.
- Do not burn anything in the fireplace other than firewood and do not leave a fire burning when going to sleep.
- Install smoke detectors and make sure they work.
- Review and practice your family's fire escape plan.
- ✓ Prevent carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning by never using generators, charcoal grills or gas grills indoors and by installing a CO detector to alert you of the presence of the deadly, odorless, colorless gas. Watch this [#FLHealthMinute video](#) to learn more on how to prevent CO poisoning.
- ✓ As temperatures dip below freezing, leave your home's water taps slightly open so they drip continuously.
- ✓ Eat well-balanced meals to stay warmer. Avoid drinking alcoholic beverages - they cause your body to lose heat more rapidly. Instead, drink warm beverages such as hot chocolate or hot tea to help maintain your body temperature. If you have any dietary restrictions, consult your doctor.
- ✓ Bring pets out of the cold weather and provide them warm shelter.
- ✓ Cold weather can displace wild animals. Stay clear of wild or feral animals including cats, bats or raccoons especially if they look sick or appear injured. They could have rabies and hurt animals can also injure you. Watch this [video](#) on rabies prevention to learn more.

For more information on winter weather safety, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's [Winter Weather Preparedness](#) page and the Florida Division of Emergency Management's website at www.FloridaDisaster.org.

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