



COUNTY HEALTH MATTERS

CONTACT:

Shawn Kelsch
Warren County Health Department
636-456-7474

Winter Weather

Jan 7, 2005

Is Your Family Prepared for Winter?

By: Lisa Smith, WCHD Office Manager

Each year dozens of people die due to exposure to extreme cold. Threats such as hypothermia and frostbite, can lead to loss of fingers and toes or cause permanent kidney, pancreas and liver injury and even death. People can become trapped at home or in a car, without utilities or other assistance during a major winter storm. Being prepared can mean the difference between life and death.

There are a few simple rules you can follow to ensure that your family is safe in the event that a severe winter storm hits. If you have to go outside make sure your dressed properly by wearing several layers of loose fitting clothing, mittens and a hat because entrapped, insulating air, warmed by body heat is the best protection from the cold. Avoid overexertion; the strain from cold temperatures and heavy labor such as shoveling, pushing a car, or walking in deep snow may cause a heart attack in older and less physically fit individuals.

Winterize your vehicle before the first blast of winter. Keep your gas tank greater than half full at all times so your lines don't freeze. Make sure your car has adequate antifreeze, tires with good traction, a fairly new battery, and that your heater and defroster work properly. You may want to carry a Winter-Survival Safety kit in your vehicle. Some items to have in the kit may include blankets, a flashlight, an extra change of clothing, waterproof matches, a compass, jumper cables, a shovel, sand, and extra batteries. In case you get stuck and need to wait for help it might be a good idea to also have some non-perishable foods on hand such as candy bars, canned goods, or high calorie foods like Power Bars.

As winter becomes a reality have your furnace checked, seal any windows that you suspect allow cold air into the house, prepare a home safety kit, and make sure you have plenty of batteries and candles and matches on hand. Your kit should include non-perishable food, medicine, and a battery operated radio. When a heavy snowstorm or ice storm hits you may be trapped in your home without utilities. Having an emergency plan will help keep you and your family safe until the power can be restored. If you lose heat in your home seal off any unused rooms by stuffing towels or rags in the cracks under the door. Cover the windows with blankets or sheets at night if you have some extras available, and use only heat sources designed for heating indoors. Follow all safety precautions carefully. Make sure you have a communication plan in case your family gets separated. Don't forget to check on your neighbors who may need special assistance such as elderly persons, and people with disabilities.

The aftermath of a winter storm can have an impact on a community or region for days, weeks or even months. You can find more information on how to protect your home and family from the



Warren County Health Department

104 W. Booneslick · Suite H · Warrenton, MO 63383

636-456-7474 / Fax: 636-456-4966

Web Address: <http://warren.lphamo.org>

National Weather Service website at www.nws.noaa.gov, the Federal Emergency Management Agency website at www.fema.gov and the Red Cross website at www.redcross.org.