pennsylvania
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

BE PREPARED FOR WINTER WEATHER

STAYING SAFE AND HEALTHY DURING WINTER WEATHER

- When bad winter weather strikes Pennsylvania – especially snow, cold temperatures or high winds – try to stay indoors as much as possible.
- If you have to go outside, keep your trips brief and follow the tips in this section.

Outdoor Safety

Dress Warmly and Stay Dry

- Adults and children should wear:
  - A hat;
  - A scarf or knit mask to cover face and mouth;
  - Sleeves that are snug at the wrist;
  - Mittens (they are warmer than gloves);
  - Water-resistant coat and boots; and
  - Several layers of loose-fitting clothing.
- Be sure the outer layer of your clothing is tightly woven, preferably wind resistant, to reduce losing body-heat. Wool, silk or polypropylene inner layers of clothing will hold more body heat than cotton.
- Stay dry – wet clothing chills the body quickly. Excess sweat will increase heat loss too, so remove extra layers of clothing whenever you feel too warm.
- Do not ignore shivering. It's an important first sign that the body is losing heat. Shivering is a sign it's time to return indoors.

Shovel Snow Safely

- Cold weather puts an extra strain on the heart. If you have heart disease or high blood pressure, follow your doctor's advice about shoveling snow or performing other hard work in the cold.
- If you have to do heavy outdoor chores, dress warmly and work slowly. Remember, your body is already working hard just to stay warm, so don't overdo it.
- Additional tips to make snow shoveling safer:
  - Warm up your muscles with 10 minutes of light exercise and stretching;
  - Dress appropriately;
  - Consider shoveling in shifts instead of all at once;
  - Take breaks and drink water to prevent dehydration;
  - Use a shovel that is correctly sized for your body;
  - When possible, push snow instead of lifting it. If you must lift, bend your legs and not your back;
  - Avoid twisting motions that can stress your back; and
  - If you experience chest pain, shortness of breath or other symptoms of a heart attack, seek immediate medical care or call 9-1-1.
- If using a snow blower, be sure to read and follow all safety instructions and stay aware of others who may be nearby.

Indoor Safety

- Although staying indoors can help reduce the risk of car crashes and falls on the ice, you may also face indoor hazards.
- If a power outage occurs, your home may be too cold. Read the following important section on preventing carbon monoxide poisoning if you plan to use an alternate source (like a fireplace) to heat your home.

Prevent Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

- Carbon monoxide (CO) is an odorless, colorless gas that can cause sudden illness and death if breathed in.
- When power outages occur during winter storms, the use of other sources of fuel or electricity for heating, cooling or cooking can cause CO to build up in a home, garage or camper and poison the people and animals inside.
- CO is found in combustion fumes, such as those made by small gasoline engines, stoves, generators, lanterns and gas ranges, or by burning charcoal and wood.
- How to recognize CO poisoning:
  - Exposure to CO can cause loss of consciousness and death
  - The most common symptoms of CO poisoning are:
    - Headache;
    - Dizziness;
    - Weakness;
    - Nausea;
    - Vomiting;
    - Chest pain; and
    - Confusion.
  - People who are sleeping or who have been drinking alcohol can die from CO poisoning before ever having symptoms.
- Important CO poisoning prevention tips:
  - Never use a gas range or oven to heat a home.
  - Never leave the motor running in a vehicle parked in an enclosed or partially enclosed space, such as a garage.
  - Never run a motor vehicle, generator, pressure washer or any gasoline-powered engine outside an open window, door or vent where exhaust can come into an enclosed area.
  - Never run a generator, pressure washer or any gasoline-powered engine inside a basement, garage or other enclosed structure, even if the doors or windows are open, unless the equipment is professionally installed and vented. Keep vents and flues free of debris, especially if winds are high. Flying debris can block ventilation lines.
  - Never use a charcoal grill, hibachi, lantern or portable camping stove inside a home, garage or camper.
  - If conditions are too cold, seek shelter with friends or at a community shelter.
  - If CO poisoning is suspected, call a healthcare professional right away.

STOCK UP ON EMERGENCY SUPPLIES

- An emergency supply kit is a vital part of emergency preparedness. If you already have emergency supply kits, check them before winter weather strikes to make sure nothing has expired and you have everything you might need.

- Following are some of the basic items you should include in the kit for your home, vehicle and workplace.

- For your home:
  - General basic items:
    - Bottled water (each person in your family needs at least one gallon every day for drinking and bathing)
    - At least a three-day supply of foods that won't spoil and don't need to be heated
    - Battery-powered radio and extra batteries
    - Flashlight and extra batteries
    - First aid kit
  - For children:
    - Baby formula/food and bottles for at least three days
    - Diapers for at least three days
    - Extra set of clothing
  - For adults:
    - One-week minimum supply of prescription medicines
    - Denture needs
    - Extra contact lenses (and supplies)/eyeglasses
  - For people with special needs and older Pennsylvanians:
    - One-week minimum supply of prescription medicines
    - Medical equipment and information on how it's used and extra batteries
    - Extra eyeglasses, contacts and hearing aids/batteries
  - For pets/service animals:
    - At least three days' worth of pet food, bottled water and supplies
    - Medications (for at least three days) and medical records (including vet info)
    - Microchip, tattoo number or photo to help identify your pet
  - Important documents folder in water-proof container
    - Copies of:
      - Medicare/Medicaid and health insurance cards
      - Copies of birth certificates
      - Copies of drivers' licenses and vehicle registration information
      - Copies of homeowner and car insurance

Click here to view/print the complete home supply kit checklist or visit www.ReadyPA.org.

- For your vehicle:
  - Cellular phone and charger
  - Enough water and food that won't spoil for at least three days
  - Blanket, extra clothing and gloves
  - First aid kit
  - Sand or cat litter to use as traction if you get stuck in the snow/ice

  Click here to view/print the complete vehicle supply kit checklist or visit www.ReadyPA.org.

- For your workplace:
  - Enough bottled water and food that won't spoil for at least one day
  - Extra clothes and a blanket
  - Medications
  - Personal hygiene items (like a toothbrush, toothpaste, deodorant, etc.)
  - Extra glasses, contacts and supplies

  Click here to view/print the complete vehicle supply kit checklist or visit www.ReadyPA.org.