Hendricks County Health Department

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December 20th, 2019   (317) 745-9618

5 WAYS TO STAY SAFE AND HEALTHY THIS WINTER
Hendricks County public health officials encourage residents to adequately prepare for winter weather.

HENDRICKS COUNTY, IN – As we enter the holiday season, frigid temperatures and snowfall have already settled over Central Indiana. With these winter weather events comes higher risks to families and individuals related to power outages, time spent outdoors, and travelling on slick roadways.

Hendricks County Health Department (HCHD) officials recommend following these five steps to keep yourself and/or your family safe and healthy this winter.

1) **Winterize your home** – "As the frequency of winter storms increases from December through March, it is essential to prepare your home to weather the storms," says Krista Click, Environmental Health Director at HCHD. "Prepping your home includes several simple tasks such as installing weather stripping on the seams of doors and windows, servicing and cleaning your heating system and/or chimneys, changing batteries in smoke and carbon monoxide (CO) detectors, and ensuring water pipes are provided warm air on the coldest nights."

2) **Stock up on necessities and emergency supplies** – "During more severe winter weather events, power outages are likely to effect some residents," says Jeff Corder, Preparedness Coordinator at HCHD. "One of the best ways you can prevent discomfort or emergencies during power outages is by stocking up on necessities such as nonperishable foods and bottled water, as well as emergency supplies such as blankets, flashlights and batteries, a first aid kit, toiletries and baby items, a battery powered phone charger, and any prescribed medications." To avoid CO poisoning, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) also warn against ever using a grill, camp stove, propane heater, or generator inside the house. CO poisoning symptoms can include nausea, dizziness, headache, weakness, and confusion – dial 911 immediately if your or a family member exhibit these symptoms.

3) **Dress appropriately for and limit outdoor time** – "Three of the greatest threats to you or a family member when spending time outside in the cold are frostbite, hypothermia, and injuries due to falling," says Kandi Jamison, Public Health Nursing Director at HCHD. "Be sure to wear warm inner layers, a thick woven coat, gloves, a scarf, waterproof boots, and a hat. Do your best not to get soaking wet when playing in the snow, and always remember to put salt or kitty litter down on sidewalks and driveways to prevent slipping."

4) **Avoid travel during weather advisories** -- "When local weather and emergency authorities issue travel advisories related to winter weather, it is essential to obey them in order to prevent car accidents," says Corder. "Yes, we all need to get to work, but your safety and your family's safety are more important than being on-time. If you can avoid travelling during advisories, please do so."

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5) **If you must travel, prepare your car and drive safely** -- The CDC recommends preparing your car for winter travel by checking tire tread and pressures, using cold-weather windshield washer fluid, serving the radiator and antifreeze levels, and keeping the gas tank full. It's also advised to keep an emergency kit in your car which includes a flashlight, batteries, a radio, a blanket, booster cables, first aid kit, a portable phone charger, and nonperishable food and water.

For more information about preventing injury or illness this winter, please visit the CDC's winter weather webpage at https://www.cdc.gov/features/winterweather/index.html.