



# **NEWS RELEASE**

## **St. Charles County Government**

**Department of Governmental Communications**

*Lisa Dunham, Director  
(636) 949-1892*

### **Reduce Injury and Illness During Winter Weather**

*Simple tips to protect your health and home*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Gil Copley, Director, Department of Community Health and the Environment  
Julie Burkemper, Public Information Officer

December 20, 2004

636-949-7477

636-949-7408

**St. Charles County** – When winter temperatures drop significantly below normal, staying warm and safe can become a challenge. Extremely cold temperatures, power outages and icy roads, inadequate heating sources, space heaters and fireplaces can all increase the risk of illness or injury. The St. Charles County Department of Community Health and the Environment is encouraging the public to take steps early to prepare their homes for winter and protect themselves from illness and injury.

- ◆ Install storm windows, or cover windows with plastic from the inside.
- ◆ Insulate water lines that run along outer walls.
- ◆ Caulk and weather-strip doors and windows.
- ◆ Have chimney and flue inspected.
- ◆ Have gas or electric heaters serviced.
- ◆ Install a carbon monoxide monitor and smoke alarms.
- ◆ Stock up on canned goods, non-perishable foods and bottled water.
- ◆ Have on hand a battery-powered radio with extra batteries.

Exposure to cold temperatures can cause serious or life-threatening health problems. Although anyone can be affected by cold weather, infants and the elderly are particularly at risk. Infants lose body heat more easily than adults, and they can't make enough body heat by shivering. Infants less than one year old should never sleep in a cold room. If the house can't be adequately warmed, infants should be moved to a warmer location. Senior adults often make less body heat than younger adults because of a slower metabolism and less physical activity. Their homes should be adequately heated and checked often for temperature levels.

When exposed to cold temperatures, a person's body begins to lose heat faster than it can be produced. Body temperature that is too low (hypothermia) affects the brain, making a person unable to think clearly or move well. Those affected may not even realize they are suffering from hypothermia and may do nothing to help themselves. Wind can also carry body heat away more quickly. The wind chill can be much lower than the temperature outside, increasing the risk of weather-related health problems.



# ***NEWS RELEASE***

## **St. Charles County Government**

**Department of Governmental Communications**

*Lisa Dunham, Director*  
*(636) 949-1892*

Appropriate clothing such as a hat, a scarf and knit mask to cover the face and mouth, sleeves that are snug at the wrist, mittens (they are warmer than gloves), a waterproof coat and shoes and several layers of loose-fitting clothing will help protect against the cold

Individuals should watch for the warning signs of hypothermia, including shivering, confusion, memory loss, drowsiness, exhaustion, fumbling hands and slurred speech. If signs of hypothermia are present, and the person's temperature is below 95°F, they need immediate medical attention! If medical care is not available, the person should be warmed using the following methods.

- ◆ They should be moved to a warm room and any wet clothing removed.
- ◆ The center of their body, such as the chest, neck, head and groin should be warmed first under loose, dry layers of blankets.
- ◆ If conscious they may drink warm, non-alcoholic beverages.
- ◆ Once their body temperature has increased, they should be kept dry and wrapped in a warm blanket, including their head and neck.
- ◆ They should get medical attention as soon as possible.

Preventative action is the best defense against extreme cold-weather conditions. The risk of weather-related illness and injury can be reduced by preparing one's home in advance for winter weather and by following safe practices during extreme weather conditions.