



NEWS RELEASE

St. Charles County Government

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WINTER WEATHER HEALTH AND SAFETY TIPS

What to do in Response to Winter Storm Throughout Region?

St. Charles County, Missouri – As a severe winter storm is bringing heavy snow and potentially deadly conditions to St. Charles County and the surrounding region today and throughout this week, residents are encouraged to follow several life-saving tips. To learn the latest information on the progress of the storm, residents should follow regular weather updates through the media or NOAA Weather Radio. In addition, the state of Missouri has established a Winter Weather Guide that may be found at www.mo.gov.

St. Charles County Executive Steve Ehlmann issued a state of emergency that encourages limited activity until conditions improve. This warning recommends residents limit travel and check road conditions if driving is essential. If you must travel and need assistance, please call 9-1-1 for emergencies or the St. Charles County Sheriff's Department at 636-949-0809 for non-emergencies. If you become trapped in your car or stranded during a winter storm, remain in your vehicle and periodically run the engine/heater for 10 minutes each hour to keep warm (remember to slightly open a downwind window and clear the exhaust pipe for ventilation), tie a brightly colored cloth to the car to signal rescuers, wrap your body in extra clothing and blankets, and stay awake until help arrives.

To remain safe at home during this storm, caution is advised. Wear clothing sufficient for the weather and dress in layers. When heating your home, follow manufacturer's instructions for proper operations and ensure adequate ventilation to minimize the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning. If a heater-unit has any damage or produces sparks, do not use. In addition, make certain that heaters are an adequate distance away from any flammable materials (such as drapes, furniture, or bedding). In the event that your home loses access to electricity or you do not have adequate heating, a list of area warming centers can be found at the United Way's Missouri 2-1-1 website <http://www.211missouri.org>.

As travel in these conditions is not recommended, area nursing homes and senior centers are requested to assist their staff as normal instead of delivering patients to area hospitals. In the event that power is lost within the facility, a center should contact Missouri 2-1-1 (dial 211 or 800-427-4626) or the County's Emergency Operations Center at 636-949-3023 for generator assistance. In the event that evacuation is deemed necessary, a facility will be contacted and arrangements will be made.

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Preventative action is the best defense against extreme cold-weather conditions. Appropriate clothing such as a hat, a scarf 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. Be aware that many prescription drugs may make you more sensitive to the cold, so check with your physician or pharmacist to find out if your medication falls in this category.

Extremely low temperatures are expected in connection with this storm, and exposure to these extreme temperatures can cause serious health problems — especially with infants and the elderly. When exposed to cold temperatures, a person’s body begins to lose heat faster than it can be produced. A body temperature that is too low is termed “hypothermia” and can affect brain function. Signs of hypothermia include uncontrollable shivering, mental slowness and lethargy, clumsiness, slurred speech, drowsiness, and unexplained exhaustion (severe symptoms include a fall in blood pressure, shallow breathing, and coma). If a person’s body temperature drops below 95° Fahrenheit, immediate medical attention is required. To help raise this temperature while seeking medical attention, remove any wet clothing and move the person to a room with a temperature of at least 68° F (focusing on efforts to warm the core of the body – chest, neck, head and groin areas). If conscious, they may drink warm, non-alcoholic beverages, eat a hot meal, and wrap themselves in a warm blanket.

Another concern in cold temperatures is frostbite, which is an injury caused by body tissue freezing. Symptoms of frostbite include pain in a skin area, a change in skin appearance (reddish, bluish or whitish coloring), numbness, and stiffness. If untreated, frostbite can result in frozen extremities and other affected skin areas, and possibly amputation. To prevent frostbite, protect skin from direct exposure to cold air and from exposure to intensely cold wind.

The St. Charles County Department of Community Health and the Environment is committed to the protection and enhancement of health and the quality of life for all members of our community. For information on programs offered and to discover ways the Department assists our community, please visit www.scchealth.org or call 636-949-7400.

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