

Red Cross Information Keeps You Safe and Warm During Ongoing Frigid Weather

WASHINGTON, Tuesday, January 13, 2009 — Record-setting cold temperatures which have frozen the upper Midwest are expected to move into the Northeast, mid-Atlantic and South over the next few days. Forecasters say temperatures in some areas could drop into the single digits.

The American Red Cross wants everyone to stay safe and warm during this frigid spell and offers the following tips on how to best care for yourself and your family when temperatures plunge:

Protect Yourself:

- Dress in several layers of lightweight clothing, which will keep you warmer than a single heavy coat.
- Mittens provide more warmth to your hands than gloves. Wear a hat, preferably one that covers your ears.
- Wear waterproof, insulated boots to keep your feet warm and dry and to maintain your footing in ice and snow.
- Take frequent breaks and stay hydrated.
- Seek medical attention immediately if you have symptoms of hypothermia including confusion, dizziness, exhaustion and severe shivering.
- Seek medical attention immediately if you have symptoms of frostbite including numbness, flushed gray, white, blue or yellow skin discoloration, numbness, or waxy feeling skin.

Protect Yourself at Home:

- Be careful with candles – do not use candles for lighting if the power goes out. Use flashlights only.
- Inspect fireplaces and wood stoves yearly - use a sturdy fire screen with lit fires. Burn only wood - never burn paper or pine boughs.
- Use generators correctly –never operate a generator inside your home, including the basement or garage. Do not hook up a generator directly to your home's wiring. The safest thing to do is to connect the equipment you want to power directly to the outlets on the generator.
- Prevent frozen pipes - when the weather is very cold outside, open cabinet doors to let warm air circulate around water pipes. Let the cold water drip from the faucet served by exposed pipes. Running water through the pipe - even at a trickle - helps prevent pipes from freezing because the temperature of the water running through it is above freezing. Keep the thermostat set to a consistent temperature.
- Check smoke alarms once a month by pressing the test button and replace batteries as necessary.
- Don't overload your electrical outlets.

- Don't forget your pets – bring them indoors. If you can't bring them inside, provide adequate shelter to keep them warm and make sure they can get to unfrozen water.
- If you plan on using an alternate heating source, never use a stove or oven to heat your home. Keep a glass or metal fire screen around the fireplace and never leave a fireplace fire unattended. If using a space heater, follow the manufacturer's instructions on how to safely use the heater. Place it on a level, hard, nonflammable surface. Turn the space heater off when you leave the room or go to sleep. Keep children and pets away from your space heater and do not use it to dry wet clothing.

About the American Red Cross:

The American Red Cross shelters, feeds and counsels victims of disasters; provides nearly half of the nation's blood supply; teaches lifesaving skills; and supports military members and their families. The Red Cross is a charitable organization — not a government agency — and depends on volunteers and the generosity of the American public to perform its humanitarian mission. For more information, please visit www.redcross.org or join our blog at www.redcrosschat.org.

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