Vol. 4
Issue 11

Inside This Issue

November 2008

Preparing for Winter

Winter Weather Terms

STEP Pilot Program

Survey—Home Fires

WHAT'S NEW:

UPCOMING TRAINING and EXERCISES

HSEEP Training

Post-Blast Bomb School

CO & Heating Systems

ICS 300 & 400

REMEMBER OUR VETS

Veteran's Day
November 11th

Commissioner Notes

By James M. Thomas

The theme of this month's issue is "Preparing for Winter", and unfortunately we have been experiencing some very cold weather associated with some significant winds and even snow in the latter part of October, so this information may be of great value to everyone.

This winter is expected to be a tough one in that we all know that we will have snow and ice etc, but the one variable is what the costs are going to be for us to heat our homes and businesses. Unfortunately the price of energy is too volatile to predict with any degree of accuracy. Everyone must do whatever they can to conserve energy, and also be very smart in every thing we do this winter, to keep expenses down and still keep everyone warm and most importantly safe!!

The National Weather Service (NWS) has advised us that Winter Weather Awareness Week is actually October 26- November 1st. The key message that they are sending out this year is that the weather warnings and advisories have been simplified. There will be fewer event specific warnings and advisories from the National Weather Service. They have indicated that this new system will reduce confusion and better prepare the public.

There will be four (4) warnings: Blizzard…Ice Storm…Winter Storm…and Wind Chill; and there will be three advisories: Winter Weather… Freezing Rain…and Wind Chill. A list of the terms and their definitions are in the newsletter for your review.

We know that this past weekend we had significant wind damage throughout the state, and some 50,000 customers were without power at the peak of the storm. But because of the tremendous efforts of the power companies the power was restored to most of the customers within a reasonably short time. If this is any indication of the future weather we will be busy this coming winter season.

Also highlighted is the pilot emergency management preparedness program being offered to 4th graders know as STEP (Student Tools for Emergency Planning). This program appears to be a big success and we will be evaluating its impact and hope to continue if funding is available from FEMA.

Finally as we go into the month of November we have highlighted a very special program "Salute to the Veterans" which was held on October 3rd, 4th and 5th at Brainard Airport in Hartford. **As we celebrate Veteran's Day on November 11th this month, let us remember all of the veterans, those who have served and those who are serving now, as we owe them a very big debt of gratitude, for freedom is not free.**

Winter Preparation

Written by the DEMHS Emergency Management Division Operations Staff with Facts provided with permission of the Northeast States Emergency Consortium

New England is famous worldwide for its four picturesque seasons. Our climate is unique to our area alone. As we are all aware, we have a long history of severe winter storms and blizzards. The most severe storm ever recorded happened on March 11-14, 1888. Snow depths from this storm were reported from 30 to 50 inches. The blizzard of 1978 left us 24 to 38 inches of snow and ice, immobilizing most interstate highways. The "Blizzard of the Century" in March 1993 dumped major depths of snow and ice from Alabama to Maine. The storm left 170 dead, hundreds of thousands of power outages and was credited with causing over $800 million in damages. In the past year alone, the State Emergency Operations Center was activated for several winter storms that snarled traffic and caused major delays in transportation across the state. DEMHS will continue to provide up to date weather messages as we encounter the winter season.

In the Event of a Winter Storm:

IF YOU ARE AT HOME DURING A SEVERE WINTER STORM:

- Listen to commercial radio, television, the internet, or NOAA Weather Radio for winter weather reports, watches, warnings, and other emergency information.
- Keep in mind that during a severe winter storm it could be hours, or even days, before emergency personnel are able to reach you. Plan to stay inside and make it on your own for awhile. The more you plan ahead for severe winter storms, the better of you will be.
- Help elderly or disabled friends, neighbors or employees stay safe and warm during the storm. Check up on them, shovel their walkways, and invite them into your home if necessary.
- Conserve fuel, if necessary, by keeping your home cooler than normal. Lower the thermostat to 65° during the day and 60° during the night. You can also close the doors to unused rooms and lower the heat in those rooms. Cover windows at night with heavy drapes to help keep in. Fuel carriers may not reach you for days after a severe winter storm.
- If your pipes freeze, locate the section of pipe that is frozen. Temporarily remove any insulation and wrap frozen pipes in layers of rags or newspaper. Completely open all faucets and pour hot water over the frozen pipes, starting where they were most exposed to the cold. A hand-held hair dryer, used with caution to prevent overheating, also works well.

- Ensure that dryer vents and heater exhaust pipes are clear of snow, and shovel snow away from these vents if you can.
- Avoid overexertion when shoveling snow. Overexertion can bring on a heart attack, which is a major cause of death in the winter. If you must shovel snow, stretch before going outside, take it easy, and take frequent breaks.
- Dress warmly in dry clothing. It is better to wear several layers of loose fitting, lightweight, warm clothing rather than one layer of heavy clothing. Trapped air between layers of clothing insulates best. Layers can also be removed to avoid perspiration and subsequent chill. Your outermost garments should be tightly woven and water repellent, such as a good down coat. Wear mittens, which are warmer than gloves. Wear a hat as well, since most of your body heat escapes through your head.
- Eat regularly and drink ample fluids. Food provides the body with energy for producing its own heat. Keep the body replenished with fluids to prevent dehydration while working outside..
- Be sure to keep dry. Change wet clothing frequently to prevent a loss of body heat. Wet clothing looses its ability to keep you warm and increases your chances of hypothermia.
- To avoid cramps, stretch before going outside.
- If the air is extremely cold outside, protect your lungs by covering your mouth with a scarf or ski mask. Try not to talk unless necessary.
- Do not eat snow, as it will drastically lower your body temperature. If you need to use snow for water, melt snow first.
- Watch for signs of frostbite. Generally, symptoms of frostbite include: discoloration of the skin with burning and/or tingling sensations, partial or complete numbness, and possibly intense pain. If left untreated, frostbitten skin gradually darkens after a few hours. Skin destroyed by frostbite is completely black, looks loose and flayed, as if burnt. If symptoms are detected, move the victim to a warm, safe area, and get medical help immediately.

- Watch for signs of hypothermia. Hypothermia is a dangerous condition, and should be treated immediately if symptoms of hypothermia are observed. Symptoms include: The major initial sign of hypothermia is a decrease in mental function that leads to impaired ability to make decisions. Tiredness or lethargy, changes and slurring of speech, incoherence and disorientation are typical. The person will act as if they are "drunk". Shivering is usually uncontrollable at first, but later the victim looses the ability to shiver as hypothermia gets worse. Eventually, the person cannot walk or stand, and this is followed by drowsiness, consciousness and death.

IF YOU NOTICE SYMPTOMS OF HYPOTHERMIA:

- Dial 911 or call for emergency medical assistance. While waiting for help to arrive, monitor the person's breathing. If breathing stops or seems dangerously slow or shallow, begin cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) immediately.
- Reduce heat loss by getting the victim out of the cold. Move indoors to a warm location. If you are stuck outdoors, protect the person from the wind, cover their head, and insulate their body from the cold ground. Prepare a lean-to, wind-break, or snow cave for protection from the wind. If you can, use additional heat sources: wrap the victim in a blanket, make a camp fire if you know how, or huddle in a sleeping bag with the victim.

- Replace wet clothing with warm, dry clothing.
- Do not apply direct heat. Don't use hot water, a heating pad or a heating lamp to warm the victim. Instead, apply warm compresses to the neck and chest. Don't attempt to warm the arms and legs. Heat applied to the arms and legs forces cold blood back toward the heart, lungs and brain, causing the core body temperature to drop. This can be fatal.
- Do not give alcohol. If the person is conscious and not vomiting, give warm, nonalcoholic and decaffeinated beverages to the victim.
- Don't massage or rub the person. Handle people with hypothermia gently, because they're at risk of cardiac arrest.

IF YOU ARE CAUGHT IN YOUR CAR DURING A WINTER STORM:

- Unless it is absolutely necessary, refrain from traveling during a winter storm.
- If you must drive, travel during the day and do not travel alone.
- Tell others where you are going, your timetable and primary and alternate routes, in case you get stuck.
- Keep your gas tank full to avoid ice in the tank and fuel lines. Your car engine will be your main source of heat if you get stuck.
- Stay on well-plowed main roads and avoid back road shortcuts.
- Keep an Disaster Supply Kit for your car. In addition to the normal emergency supplies, it should contain:
  - a shovel
  - windshield scraper and small broom
  - flashlight
  - battery powered radio, such as a NOAA Weather Radio
  - extra batteries
  - water
  - snack food
  - matches
  - extra hats, socks and mittens
  - first aid kit with pocket knife
  - Necessary medications
  - blanket(s)
  - tow chain or rope
  - rock salt or sand (to improve traction if you get stuck on ice or snow)
  - booster cables
  - emergency road flares
  - help sign and fluorescent distress flag
- If you get stuck on the highway, pull off the road if you can. Turn on hazard lights and place a help sign in your window, or hang a distress flag from the radio antenna.
- Stay in the car during the storm. While in your vehicle where you will have shelter from the elements, and rescuers are most likely to find you. Set out on foot only if you can see a building close by where you know you can take shelter. Be careful, as distances can be distorted by blowing snow. A building may look close, but it can really be too far to walk to in deep snow. If you must leave your car, do it once the storm passes.
- Run the engine and heater about 10 minutes each hour to keep warm. When the engine is running, partially open a downwind window for ventilation and periodically clear snow from the exhaust pipe. This will help to protect you from carbon monoxide poisoning.

- Exercise from time to time by vigorously moving arms, legs, fingers, and toes to keep blood circulating and to keep warm.
- In extreme cold, use road maps, seat covers, and floor mats for insulation from the wind and cold. Huddle with passengers and use your coat for a blanket.
- Watch for signs of frostbite and hypothermia.
- Take turns sleeping. One person should be awake at all times to look for rescue crews.
- Drink fluids to avoid dehydration, and avoid caffeine and alcohol.
- Be careful not to waste battery power. You do not want to kill your car battery while you still have gasoline. Be conservative with the use of lights and radio, and run fans and heaters with the engine on. If the car battery starts to die out, run the car engine to recharge it. When the engine is running, partially open a downwind window for ventilation and periodically clear snow from the exhaust pipe. This will help to protect you from carbon monoxide poisoning.
- At night, turn on the inside dome light when the engine is running so that work crews or rescuers can see you.
- If stranded in a remote area, stomp large block letters in an open area spelling out HELP or SOS and line with rocks or tree limbs to attract the attention of rescue personnel who may be surveying the area by airplane.

AFTER A WINTER STORM:

- Flooding and ice jams can occur from thaws after a severe winter snowstorm, so be prepared for these disasters during the winter as well.
- Make sure your family has clothing warm enough for the winter season.
- Make sure your family knows what to do if they are caught in a winter storm. Everyone should know what to do in case all family members are not together at the time the storm hits.
- Know ahead of time what you should do to help elderly or disabled friends, neighbors or employees.
- Add the following supplies to your Disaster Supply Kit in your home to help prepare you to a winter storm: rock salt or sand to melt ice and improve traction, and snow shovels or other snow removal equipment.

- Have sufficient heaters and plenty of fuel on hand in case the the power goes out or your regular fuel shipments are cut off. For example, store a good supply of dry, seasoned wood for your fireplace or wood-burning stove. Or install a permanent, propane-fed standby power generator to keep your furnace running through a power outage.
- If you plan to use kerosene heaters if the power goes out, check with your local fire department on the legality of using one in your community.
- Keep fire extinguishers on hand, and make sure everyone in your house knows how to use them. The risk of house fires increases during a winter storm, as more people turn to alternate heating sources without taking the necessary safety precautions.

Install carbon monoxide alarms to warn you if carbon monoxide builds up in your home. Most alternative heating sources can release carbon monoxide if set up improperly, and even properly maintained furnaces can release carbon monoxide into your home if outside exhaust vents are choked with snow.

Winterize your home to extend the life of your heating fuel supply. Insulate your walls and attics. Caulk and weather-strip your doors and windows. A lot of heat is lost from your home through single-pane windows, even when they are closed and caulked. If you have single-pane windows, install storm windows or cover them with interior or exterior plastic sheeting. Winterize your barn, shed or any other structure that you will need for livestock or equipment that cannot be frozen.

Clear rain gutters; repair roof leaks and cut away tree branches that could fall on a house or other structure during a storm.

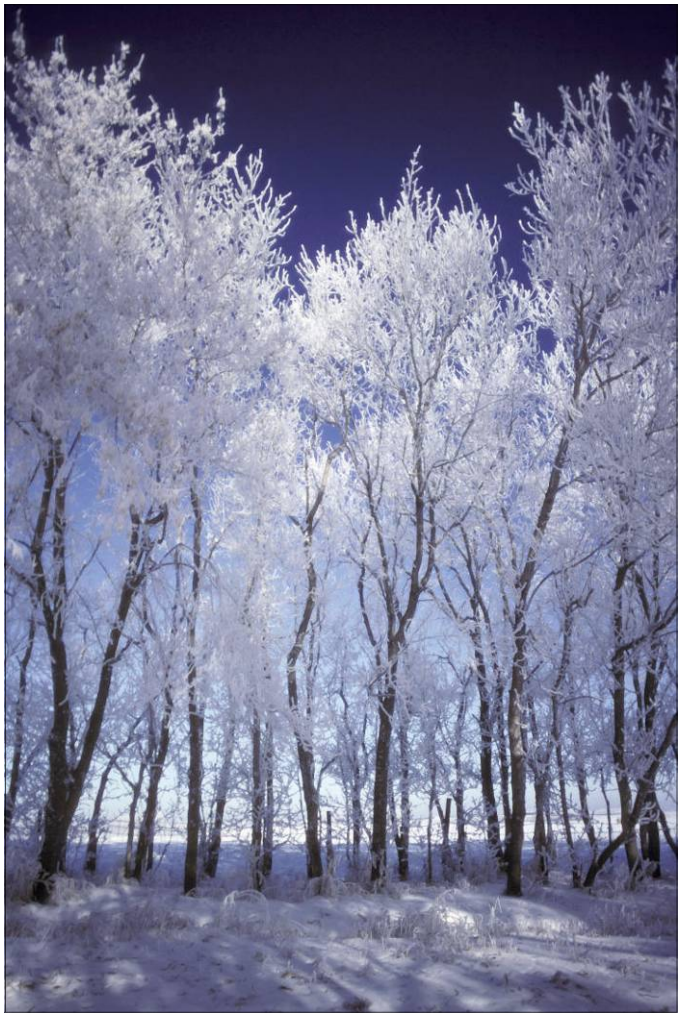
Insulate your pipes with fire-rated pipe insulation, or newspapers and plastic if you don't have time to buy insulation before the storm hits. Allow faucets to drip a little during cold weather to avoid freezing.

Learn how to shut off water valves in case a pipe bursts.

Service snow removal equipment before winter storm

season. Equipment should be available for use if needed. Maintain it in good working order.
Install snow fences in rural areas to keep snow drifts off of roads and paths, which could block access to homes, barns, and animals' feed and water.
Trim bushes away from dryer vents and heater exhaust pipes>
Hire a contractor to check the structural ability of your roof to sustain the heavy weight of snow. This is especially important if you have a flat roof, as water can also collect on your roof if drains are clogged with ice and snow during a storm.
If you live in a flood-prone area, consider purchasing flood insurance to cover possible flood damage that may occur during the spring thaw. Homeowners' policies usually do not cover damage from floods. Ask your insurance agent about the National Flood Insurance Program if you are at risk.
Get first-aid training. Take an American Red Cross first aid course to learn how to treat exposure to the cold, frostbite, and hypothermia.

- Prepare your car for hazardous winter driving. Create a Disaster Supply Kit for your car, and place one in each of your vehicles. Check, or have a mechanic check each of the following:
- Use good winter tires. Make sure the tires have adequate tread. All-weather radials are usually adequate for most winter conditions, but roads in some areas will require severe snow tires.
- Purchase a set of tire chains if you are in a remote area or an area with a lot of snow. Purchase the right size chains for your tires. Know how to attach them properly, and know how to drive with them. Keep your speed below 30mph while driving with chains, and avoid driving on dry pavement with chains. After driving for a short while, you should tighten the chains a second time. Chains that come loose should be refastened before they wrap around your vehicle's axle, which can cause damage to your car.
- Antifreeze levels should be sufficient to avoid freezing in cold winter weather.
- Your ignition should be in top condition, your car battery should be strong, and your battery terminals should be clean.
- Your exhaust system should be free of leaks and crimped pipes. Repair or replace parts as necessary. If your car gets stuck in a winter storm, a leaky exhaust system could fill your car with dangerous carbon monoxide even if the tail pipe is clear of snow.
- Your brakes should be free of wear, and brake fluid levels should be high. Stopping is already difficult during a winter storm, and you don't want to make the situation worse.
- Keep your fuel tank full during a storm. Your car engine will be your main source of heat if you get stuck.



- Check your oil, and use a lighter engine oil during the winter. Heavier oils congeal more in cold temperatures and do not lubricate as well.
- For winter weather, your heater, defroster, thermostat, and hazard lights should all work properly.

NOAA'S NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE SAYS: KNOW YOUR WINTER WEATHER TERMS

NOAA's National Weather Service urges residents to keep abreast of local forecasts and warnings and familiarize themselves with key weather terminology.

Winter Storm Warning: Issued when hazardous winter weather in the form of heavy snow, heavy freezing rain, or heavy sleet is imminent or occurring. Winter Storm Warnings are usually issued 12 to 24 hours before the event is expected to begin.
Winter Storm Watch: Alerts the public to the possibility of a blizzard, heavy snow, heavy freezing rain, or heavy sleet. Winter Storm Watches are usually issued 12 to 48 hours before the beginning of a Winter Storm.
Winter Storm Outlook: Issued prior to a Winter Storm Watch. The Outlook is given when forecasters believe winter storm conditions are possible and are usually issued 3 to 5 days in advance of a winter storm.
Blizzard Warning: Issued for sustained or gusty winds of 35 mph or more, and falling or blowing snow creating visibilities at or below ¼ mile; these conditions should persist for at least three hours.
Lake Effect Snow Warning: Issued when heavy lake effect snow is imminent or occurring.
Lake Effect Snow Advisory: Issued when accumulation of lake effect snow will cause significant inconvenience.
Wind Chill Warning: Issued when wind chill temperatures are expected to be hazardous to life within several minutes of exposure.
Wind Chill Advisory: Issued when wind chill temperatures are expected to be a significant inconvenience to life with prolonged exposure, and, if caution is not exercised, could lead to hazardous exposure.
Winter Weather Advisories: Issued for accumulations of snow, freezing rain, freezing drizzle, and sleet which will cause significant inconveniences and, if caution is not exercised, could lead to life-threatening situations.
Dense Fog Advisory: Issued when fog will reduce visibility to ¼ mile or less over a widespread area.
Snow Flurries: Light snow falling for short durations. No accumulation or light dusting is all that is expected.
Snow Showers: Snow falling at varying intensities for brief periods of time. Some accumulation is possible.
Snow Squalls: Brief, intense snow showers accompanied by strong, gusty winds. Accumulation may be significant. Snow squalls are best known in the Great Lakes region.
Blowing Snow: Wind-driven snow that reduces visibility and causes significant drifting. Blowing snow may be snow that is falling and/or loose snow on the ground picked up by the wind.
Sleet: Rain drops that freeze into ice pellets before reaching the ground. Sleet usually bounces when hitting a surface and does not stick to objects. However, it can accumulate like snow and cause a hazard to motorists.
Freezing Rain: Rain that falls onto a surface with a temperature below freezing. This causes it to freeze to surfaces, such as trees, cars, and roads, forming a coating or glaze of ice. Even small accumulations of ice can cause a significant hazard.

Upcoming Training & Exercise

Nov 3 & Nov 5	HS Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP) - Wethersfield (2 day course)
Nov 3 thru 7	Indoor Post-Blast Bomb Investigator School—POSTC
Nov 13	FEMA Region I Hurricane Functional Exercise
Nov 15	Carbon Monoxide and Heating System Emergencies - CFA
Nov 18 thru 20	ICS 300 — for Expanding Incidents—Brainard
Dec 5	Hidden Compartments within a Vehicle Training—POSTC
Dec 10 & 11	ICS 400—Advanced Command, Complex Incidents—Brainard
Dec 13	Carbon Monoxide and Heating System Emergencies - CFA

For training & exercise questions contact the Training Unit at **860-256-0840**.
Fax: 860-706-5539 or email: Training.demhs@ct.gov

You may register for these courses **as listed** at: www.ct.gov/demhs; or through POSTC at www.ct.gov/post; or through the CT Fire Academy (CFA) at www.ct.gov/cfca.

CONNECTICUT TRIAD CONFERENCE

The 7th Annual Connecticut Triad Conference "**To Catch an ID Thief**" was held at the Seamen's Inn Restaurant in Mystic, Connecticut on October 15, 2008. Attorney General Richard Blumenthal provided the welcome remarks and the key note speaker was Chris Hanson, the correspondent for NBC News "Dateline NBC." Hansen's varied reports have stirred interest in both international and national issues. In April 2007, he reported, "To Catch an ID Thief." Sharon Mazzochi and Bob Scata of the Connecticut Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security (DEMHS) spoke about the Emergency Financial First Aid Kit (EFFAK) presentation that they have given to numerousness senior citizen communities throughout the state. Over 200 people attended the conference.

STEP Pilot Program

2008-2009 School Year

Student Tools for Emergency Planning (STEP) is a preparedness education project supported by New England state emergency management. Students at the 4th grade level will be armed with strategies for dealing with various types of emergencies and will act as agents to share this awareness with family members.

This course has been or will be taught as a pilot program in three CT school

systems this year. Pictured are faculty and students from Seymour Public Schools, who completed the program in September. Also participating will be the Avon and Wilton School Districts.

The STEP Program was created by FEMA Region 1 in partnership with the Red Cross. Reports from Seymour Public Schools following the program advise that both the student's and the parents liked the program and found it to be worthwhile.

FEMA supplied all the program materials including Teacher Guides, DVDs, copies of student handouts, refrigerator magnets, demonstration emergency kits, and student starter kits for all schools participating in the pilot year.

Many thanks to Rick Kearns, Seymour Public Schools Safety Director, for the photos.

American Red Cross

National Fire Protection Association
The authority on fire, electrical, and building safety

SURVEY FINDS CONCERNS ABOUT ECONOMY MAY INCREASE INCIDENCE OF HOME FIRES

Alternative Heating Sources, Cooking May Pose Dangers

The American Red Cross and the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) released results of a survey showing the majority (79%) of Americans are concerned about the rising cost of heating their homes, and many will use an alternative heating source to reduce their bills this winter. The survey identified additional behaviors related to appliance maintenance and cooking that could also present home fire hazards this winter.

"As we head into, what by all accounts is likely to be a very costly heating season, these survey results provide a critical opportunity for us to remind people about the things they can do to prevent home fires and keep their families safe and warm this winter," said NFPA President James. M. Shannon. "If people use alternative heat sources to reduce energy costs, it is critical they use devices that are new or in good working order, and they turn off units when they go to bed or leave the room."

"We hope this survey will encourage more people to take the simple steps necessary to protect their families and homes from fire," said Gail J. McGovern, President and CEO of the American Red Cross.

Last year the American Red Cross in Connecticut responded to close to 500 home fires, providing comfort, shelter and aid to help hundreds of families pick up the pieces.

Heating and Cooking Fires:

According to NFPA reports, cooking and heating are the leading causes of home fires. The survey revealed the majority of Americans are concerned about the rising cost of heating their homes (79%), and that 48% of households will use an alternative heating source to reduce their bills this winter. Alternative heating sources include portable space heaters, stoves, ovens and fireplaces. A third (36%) of people with fireplaces reported they never cleaned or inspected their chimneys. The survey also found 23% of respondents did not consider it essential to make sure someone is home when food is cooking on the stove.

Smoke Alarms and Fire Escape Plans:

Respondents also revealed another unsafe behavior, which is disabling (37%) smoke alarms when they go off in a non-testing situation. More than half (53%) of the households surveyed have not taken any of three common actions in most home fire escape plans, which includes discussing with family members how to get out of the home, deciding on an outdoor meeting place and practicing the plan.

NFPA and the American Red Cross offer these and other safety tips:

- **Stay in the kitchen** when you are frying, grilling or broiling food. If you must leave, even for a short time, turn off the stove.
- **Install smoke alarms** on every level of your home, inside bedrooms and outside sleeping areas.
- **Give space heaters space** by keeping them at least 3 feet from anything that can burn. Turn off heaters when you leave the room or go to sleep.

For more information on preparing for a fire, or visit us online at www.ctredcross.org

VETERAN'S SALUTE

BRAINARD FIELD
HARTFORD
OCTOBER 3, 4 & 5

555

SKYRAIDER

HQ

38