

## **Division of Developmental Disabilities Advisory for Prevention of Cold- Related Illness**

In an effort to promote consistent communication with community based provider agencies regarding practices to promote the prevention of cold-related illness, the Division of Developmental Disabilities is providing the following information.

- Be aware of cold weather advisories or warnings in your area- Information may be obtained from your local radio, television, newspaper or at <http://www.nws.noaa.gov>. Knowing this information can assist with planning outdoor activities during the winter months.
- Severe winter weather can include snow, subfreezing temperatures, strong winds, ice or heavy rain and requires planning ahead.
- Taken from: FEMA Encourages Seniors And People With Special Needs To Prepare For Winter:
  - **Winter Weather Advisory** means that cold, ice and snow are expected.
  - **Winter Storm Watch** means severe weather such as heavy snow or ice is possible in the next day or two.
  - **Winter Storm Warning** means that severe winter conditions have begun or will begin very soon.
- **Extreme Cold** is defined as the outside temperature being 25 degrees Fahrenheit or below and/or when a wind chill factor is 25 degrees Fahrenheit or below- as defined by the Division of Developmental Disabilities.
- Ensure that consumer homes and vehicles have appropriate heating systems. Temperatures can drop quickly in vehicles during winter months.
- Ensure that staff is knowledgeable regarding when to seek emergency medical care regarding cold weather- related illness.
- Ensure that staff is knowledgeable regarding what to observe for regarding cold weather- related illness. It is important to communicate with the consumer's practitioner to identify specific parameters for any weather restrictions or weather precautions due to particular medical diagnosis, health conditions, prescribed medications and /or other concerns that may be impacted by outside weather conditions.

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- Ensure that all necessary supports are identified in the individual's current individualized service plan. This should include individual specific parameters for weather restrictions or weather precautions needed to maintain the individual's health, safety and well being.
- Ensure that individuals are supported to wear appropriate layered clothing including hats, gloves or mittens, scarves and appropriate foot wear.

The following Warning Signs of Hypothermia are taken from <http://health.mo.gov/living/healthcondiseases/hypothermia/index.php>:

Warning Signs of Hypothermia May Include:

- Uncontrollable shivering. In severe cases of hypothermia, shivering stops
  - Numbness
  - Glassy stare
  - Apathy
  - Weakness
  - Impaired judgment
  - Drowsiness
  - Slow or slurred speech
  - Exhaustion
  - Loss of consciousness
  - In infants, the skin turns bright red and cold
- Ensure that the individual has a plan and prior arrangements have been made with their primary physician regarding emergency plans if they are on a respirator or other electric powered medical equipment. Ensure that all support staff working with the individual are familiar with the plan.
  - Ensure that plans are in place now for electrical backup for medical equipment. Contact your electrical power supplier to determine if they offer any specific supports.
  - Ensure that there is a back-up communication plan in the event that land lines are disrupted. Examples would be to have a charged cell phone or pager.

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- When icy road conditions exist, limit travel to emergency situations only.
- Maintain a supply of medications, both prescription and non-prescription.
- Ensure that there is an adequate supply of water and non-perishable food per person.
- Ensure that there is an available supply of necessary items such as medical supplies.
- Ensure that copies of medical records, prescriptions and medical needs are readily available.
- Ensure that individuals have access to transportation in case of the need for evacuation.
- Ensure that necessary adaptive equipment is readily available and in working order.
- Ensure that service animals and pets are included in emergency plans.
- Ensure that there is an available emergency supply kit . Additional information at <http://www.ready.gov/winter-weather>

Resource information obtained from:

<http://www.fema.gov>

[http://www.disability.gov/emergency\\_preparedness](http://www.disability.gov/emergency_preparedness)

<http://emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/winter>

<http://www.ready.gov/winter-weather>

<http://gis.dhss.mo.gov/Website/WarmingCenter/warmingCenter.html>

<http://emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/winter/pdf/extreme-cold-guide.pdf>

Information leads to Knowledge. Knowledge leads to the practice of Prevention. The practice of Prevention promotes Health.