

At-A-Glance

Extreme Cold

Extreme cold is a dangerous situation that can bring on health emergencies in susceptible people, such as those without shelter or who are stranded, or who live in a home that is poorly insulated or without heat. To keep yourself and your family safe, you should know how to prevent cold-related health problems and what to do if a cold-weather health emergency arises.



When extreme cold weather occurs, keep these safety tips in mind:

- Stay indoors as much as possible.
- If you must go outside, wear several layers of loose-fitting, lightweight, warm clothing rather than one layer of heavy clothing. Outer garments should be tightly woven and water repellent. Always wear a hat and cover your mouth with a scarf to protect your lungs.
- Keep dry. Change wet clothing frequently to avoid a loss of body heat. Wet clothing loses all of its insulating value and transmits heat rapidly.
- Watch for signs of frostbite. These include loss of feeling and white or pale appearance in extremities such as fingers, toes, ears, and the tip of the nose. If symptoms are present, get medical help immediately.
- Watch for signs of hypothermia. These include uncontrollable shivering, memory loss, disorientation, slurred speech, drowsiness, and apparent exhaustion. If symptoms of hyperthermia are detected, get the victim to a warm location, remove wet clothing, warm the center of the body first and give warm, non-alcoholic beverages if the victim is conscious. Get medical help as soon as possible.
- Check on elderly or disabled relatives, friends, or neighbors.
- Do not burn paper in a fireplace.
- Ensure adequate ventilation if you must use a kerosene heater.
- Use only the type of fuel your heater is designed to use— don't substitute.
- Do not place a space heater within 3 feet of anything that may catch on fire, such as drapes, furniture, or bedding, and never cover your space heater.

Did you know?

You can lose 40 percent to 45 percent of body heat from an unprotected head and even more from the unprotected neck, wrists and ankles. These areas of the body are good radiators of heat and have very little insulating fat.

For additional information on Extreme Cold Weather Safety go to www.ready.gov.

Heat Your Home Safely

If you plan to use a wood stove, fireplace, or space heater, be extremely careful. Follow the manufacturer's instructions. Use fireplace, wood stoves, or other combustion heaters only if they are properly vented to the outside and will not leak flue gas into the indoor air space.

Sources: Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)



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