

Dept. of Military Affairs: ReadyWisconsin offers safety tips with dangerous cold temperatures expected in the state

Posted on Friday, Feb 5, 2021

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MADISON, Wis. – With dangerous cold temperatures expected to settle over the state this weekend and into next week, ReadyWisconsin is urging everyone to take precautions to keep themselves and their loved ones safe.

The National Weather Service is forecasting arctic air will move into the state starting on Friday, with air temperatures falling below zero during the overnight hours through the weekend and next week. Dangerously cold windchills, some falling below -30 degrees Fahrenheit, are also expected across Wisconsin into next week.

The Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) says 83 people died in the state last year from extreme cold. To help people avoid the risks posed by such cold temperatures, ReadyWisconsin offers the following advice:

- Limit your time outdoors. If you must be outside, dress for the weather. Wear loose-fitting layers, a hat, gloves, and snow boots. Make sure you have a scarf or some other way to cover your face.
- Know the signs of hypothermia, which include excessive shivering, exhaustion, confusion, and slurred speech. If you, or anyone around you, begins to show symptoms, call 911 immediately.
- Know the signs of frostbite, which include a white or grayish-yellow skin area, skin that feels unusually firm or waxy, and numbness. If you detect symptoms, get to a warm area. Do not try to rub them, as it can cause more damage.

- Check the supplies in your home and vehicle emergency kits. If food items or batteries have expired or run low, replace them.
- Test the smoke and carbon monoxide detectors around your home. If you can't remember the last time you changed the batteries, go ahead and replace them.
- Check your furnace to make sure it is working properly. If you rely on heating oil or propane, make sure you have enough to last through the current period of cold temperatures and schedule a delivery before you start to run low.
- Do not attempt to use gasoline or propane heaters or a grill to heat your home or garage. Those devices produce carbon monoxide, which can be deadly in enclosed areas.
- Prepare your vehicle for the possible effects of the cold weather. Keep the gas tank at least half-full. Pack an emergency kit with items such as food, water, extra blankets and warm clothing, booster cables, and a cell phone charger.
- Make sure water pipes in unheated areas are properly insulated. If you have faucets served by exposed pipes, let water drip from them or run at a slow trickle to prevent freezing. Open kitchen and bathroom cabinets to allow heat to get to the pipes.
- If you have pets, limit their time outdoors. Dogs and cats can get frost-bitten ears, nose and feet if left outside during bitter cold weather. For livestock, make sure they have access to extra food and a water source that will not freeze. Outdoor animals need access to a dry place to seek shelter. Help provide a windbreak for larger animals and an enclosed space for smaller animals to help them retain their body heat.

For those without access to a heated, safe place to stay, some communities may open warming shelters during periods of extreme cold. You can get information about many of those locations through 211 Wisconsin Contact Centers, by dialing the three-digit number 2-1-1 or 877-947-2211 and by going online to 211wisconsin.org. You can also check local government and public health agency websites for information on actions they may be taking within your community.

You can find more winter weather safety information at <https://readywisconsin.wi.gov/be-informed/winter-storms/> or through DHS at <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/climate/winter-weather.htm>.

Follow ReadyWisconsin on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/ReadyWisconsin>) and Twitter (<https://www.twitter.com/ReadyWI>) for daily safety tips. Also find your local National Weather Service office at <https://www.weather.gov/> and check in

regularly for updates on current and forecast weather conditions.