

(PORTAGE COUNTY) – Another arctic air mass will impact our region this week. With the National Weather Service predicting dangerously cold wind chills across Portage County, Portage County Emergency management and Portage County Health and Human Services are issuing a special public health advisory to prevent cold-related illness and death.

During the extreme cold, it is best to limit prolonged outside activity. If you plan on being outside, be sure to dress warm using layered clothing, as frost bite can occur in less than 20 minutes in these conditions. Prolonged exposure to temperatures this cold should be taken as a serious health threat, especially for young children, elderly, those with health conditions, and pets.

If outdoor activity is essential, everyone must be especially careful and mindful of the risks posed by severe cold. Half of all cold related injuries and deaths occur among healthy, adequately clothed individuals involved in outdoors sports. Especially hazardous are open areas such as lakes and fields, where winds can build rapidly.

Life-threatening hypothermia can develop rapidly, especially if a person is wet or damp. Shivering is the first sign of hypothermia. As hypothermia progresses, lack of coordination, slurred speech, confusion and drowsiness can occur.

Other cold weather tips include:

- Avoid touching metal surfaces with uncovered hands - flesh will freeze immediately to the surface.
- Layer clothing and use hats and ski masks to cover nose and ears when going outdoors. Hard, pale, cold extremities coupled with numbness are signs of frostbite.
- Plan for the unexpected to happen; in your car, carry a survival kit including blankets, sleeping bags, extra clothing and high-energy foods.
- Be sure your car's gas tank is at least half-full and your battery charged.

Carbon Monoxide is the leading cause of accidental poisoning deaths in the United States. Breathing carbon monoxide displaces the oxygen in the blood and can cause death within minutes at high levels. Carbon monoxide is an odorless, tasteless, and colorless gas that can be released from poorly functioning or unvented furnace or other gas-powered home appliances.

Since any heating system that burns fuel will produce carbon monoxide, follow these simple safety tips:

- Make sure you have a working carbon monoxide detector.
 - Never run a car in an enclosed space. If a vehicle is running, you must have a door open to the outside.
 - Generators should be run a safe distance from the home. Never run a generator in the home or garage, or right next to windows or doors.
 - Never run a gasoline or propane heater or a grill inside your home for warmth or in an unventilated garage.
- Symptoms of overexposure to carbon monoxide are often mistaken for the flu and include headaches, fatigue, dizziness, shortness of breath, chest pain, nausea or vomiting, and confusion. If you or someone you know experience any of these symptoms, or your carbon monoxide detector sounds an alarm, head outside immediately for fresh air and call 911.

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Warming centers - While residents of Portage County are encouraged to limit their time in the sub-zero weather, if homes are without heat there are several warming sites established throughout Portage County. The warming sites will be available during business hours as listed. If overnight accommodations are needed, residents are asked to contact Portage County Emergency Services at (715) 344-7438 or United Way's

211. Warming sites for **Wednesday, February 26, through March 1, 2014** include:

- Portage County Public Library located at 1001 Main Street, Stevens Point
715-346-1544; Hours: 9:00 AM-8 PM
- Salvation Army located at 1600 Briggs Street Stevens Point 715-341-2437: Hours 9:00AM – 9:00 PM
- Portage County Aging and Disability Resource Center located at 1519 Water Street, Stevens Point
715-346-1401; Hours: 7:30 AM – 4:30 PM (No services available if school is cancelled.)
- Portage County Health and Human Services located at 817 Whiting Avenue, Stevens Point
715-345-5350; Hours: 8:00 AM – 6:00 PM (T) and 8:00 AM – 4:30 PM (W)
- Portage County Public Library located at 1001 Main Street, Stevens Point
715-346-1544; Hours: 9:00 AM – 9:00 PM (May close early due to weather)
- Salvation Army located at 1600 Briggs Street, Stevens Point
715-341-2437; Hours: 9:00 AM – 9:00 PM
- Stevens Point Recreation Center located at 2442 Sims Avenue, Stevens Point
715-346-1536; Hours 7:30 AM – 4:00 PM
- **Lettie Jensen Community Center located at 487 North Main Street, Amherst
715-498-5012; Hours: 8:00 AM – 4:30 PM (T) and 8:00 AM – 3:30 PM (W)**
- Kennedy Elementary School located at 616 West Second Street, Junction City
715-345-5433; Hours: 8:00 AM – 3:00 PM
- Rosholt Public Library located at 137 North Main Street, Rosholt
715-677-4510; Hours: 2:00 PM – 6:00 PM
- Village of Almond Municipal Center located at 122 Main Street, Almond
715-366-8171; Hours: 8:00 AM – 5:00 PM
- Village of Plover Municipal Center located at 2400 Post Road, Plover
715-345-5252; Hours: 7:30 AM – 4:30 PM

For more information:

<http://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/health/injuryprevention/WeatherRelated/index.htm>

<http://datcp.wi.gov/>

<http://readywisconsin.wi.gov>

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