



FRIGID WEATHER SAFETY INFORMATION

MOSES LAKE (08 DECEMBER 2009) – The National Weather Service has forecasted severe cold conditions for the Grant County area. Overnight temperatures in the single digits are expected, and daytime temperatures are not expected to rise above the mid-twenties through this week.

To help prevent cold-related injuries and deaths, Grant County Emergency Management offers the following safety information for citizens:

HYPOTHERMIA begins to occur when a person's body temperature drops to 3° below its normal temperature. On average, a person would begin to suffer hypothermia if his or her temperature dropped to 96° F (35.6° C). Cold temperatures can cause hypothermia in anyone who is not adequately clothed or sheltered in a place with adequate heat. Hypothermia can kill people, and those who survive hypothermia are likely to suffer lasting ill effects.

Infants and elderly people are the most susceptible. Elderly people account for the largest percentage of hypothermia victims, many of whom freeze to death in their own homes. Most of these victims are alone and their heating systems are working improperly or not at all. People who are taking certain medications, who have certain medical conditions, or who have been drinking alcohol also are at increased risk for hypothermia.

Dress to protect yourself from frostbite and hypothermia. When outside in cold temperatures, wear warm, loose-fitting, lightweight clothing in several layers. If you get too warm, you can remove one or more layers and if you get too cold you can add layers, so you can avoid the sweat-chills cycle. Your outer garments should be tightly woven, water repellent, and have a hood. Wear a hat. Half of your body heat can be lost from your head being uncovered. Mittens, snug at the wrist, are better than gloves. Try to stay dry. If it is extremely cold, cover your mouth to protect your lungs.

Power failures may occur during winter weather, but there is still safety by staying in your home and bundling up. Most power failures do not last for days, rather they last for hours. If, during severe cold, your home loses power or heat for an extended period of time, go to a designated public shelter. For information on designated shelters, contact Grant County Emergency Management at 509-762-1462, or the American Red Cross Apple Valley Chapter at 509-663-3907.

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HOME FIRES occur more frequently in the winter because people forget to take the proper safety precautions when using alternative heating sources. Be sure all heating sources are installed according to local codes and permit requirements. To protect yourself, be sure that you never leave a fire unattended, that you dispose of ashes properly and only after they are completely cold, and that you operate and position space heaters only according to the manufacturer's instructions. Use only space heaters approved by an independent testing laboratory. Fire during winter storms is exceptionally dangerous because conditions may make it difficult for firefighters to get to the fire, and the water needed to fight the fire may be frozen.

In addition, every winter people are killed by **CARBON MONOXIDE (CO)** emitted by fuels they are using to heat their homes. Never operate unvented fuel-burning appliances in any closed room or where people are sleeping. CO poisoning from fuel-burning appliances kills people each year in the United States. Never use gas appliances such as ranges, ovens, or clothes dryers to heat your home. Do not use charcoal grills indoors or in attached garages.

Never use a portable generator in an enclosed or partially enclosed space, including in your home, or in a garage, basement, crawl space, or other partially enclosed area, even with ventilation. Opening doors and windows or using fans will not prevent CO buildup. Locate a portable generator outdoors and away from doors, windows, and vents that could allow CO to come indoors. Portable generators can produce high levels of deadly CO very quickly. In addition to producing toxic engine exhaust, portable generators can cause electric shock or electrocution and fire.

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Source: *Talking About Disaster: Guide for Standard Messages*. Washington, D.C., 2007.