

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Life-Threatening Cold Air Grips Racine County

The Racine County Office of Emergency Management would like to remind Racine County residents to take the forecasted frigid temperatures seriously and to avoid exposure to the cold.

According to the National Weather Service, the coldest temperatures of the season are being ushered in by bitterly cold Arctic air that is sweeping into the region on gusty west to northwest winds. Temperatures will remain mostly in the single digits above and below zero beginning tonight, Friday, Feb. 5, with wind chills expected to be at their coldest Saturday night into Sunday morning, dipping into the 20 to 30 below range.

“Low temperatures, coupled with even moderate wind, can make common outdoor activities life threatening, even for those appropriately dressed for the outdoors,” commented David Maack, Racine County Emergency Management Coordinator. “Exposed areas such as the nose and ears can freeze within 30 seconds with a wind chill factor of negative 30 degrees.”

Half of all cold related injuries and deaths occur among healthy, adequately clothed individuals involved in outdoor sports. Especially hazardous are open areas such as lakes and fields, where winds can build.

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.

During cold weather, you should:

- Stay indoors as much as possible and limit your exposure to the cold.
- Dress in layers and keep dry. Wear mittens, which are warmer than gloves. Wear a hat. A hat will prevent loss of body heat. Cover your mouth with a scarf to protect your lungs.
- Check on family, friends, and neighbors who are at risk and may need additional assistance.

- Know the symptoms of cold-related health issues such as frostbite and hypothermia and seek medical attention if health conditions are severe.
- Be aware of carbon monoxide dangers. Never run a gasoline or propane heater or a grill (gas or charcoal) inside your home or an unventilated garage. Any heating system that burns fuel will produce carbon monoxide.
- 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.
- Keep your car fuel tank at least half-full. Make sure your vehicle has an emergency kit that includes an ice scraper, blanket and flashlight – and keep the fuel tank above half full.
- Check on family, friends, and neighbors who are at risk and may need additional assistance.

“With extremely cold temperatures in the forecast, residents should take extra precautions and check in on their friends and neighbors to ensure we all stay safe over the next several days,” said County Executive Jonathan Delagrave.

You can find more information and tips on being ready for winter weather and extreme cold temperatures www.readyracineco.com.

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