

January 27, 2019

For Immediate Release

Contact: Michele Bever, PhD, MPH Executive Director, SHDHD
Jim Morgan, Public Health Risk Coordinator, SHDHD
1-877-238-7595 / michele.bever@southheartlandhealth.org

Officials: Prepare for Frigid Weather

Hastings, NE. Public health and National Weather Service officials are encouraging residents to be prepared for cold weather this week. “Nebraska weather can be unpredictable,” said Jim Morgan, public health risk coordinator for the South Heartland District Health Department (SHDHD). “It can be cold one morning and you need a coat. It can be warmer the next day, so you wear a jacket, but a sudden cold front can move in with high winds and your jacket isn’t enough to protect you,” Morgan said.

According to Angela Pfannkuch, meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Hastings, south central Nebraska experienced a little break from the frigid temperatures this past weekend, but another push of Arctic air is expected this week. “High temperatures in the single digits and even below zero, along with wind chills of -40 or colder, are forecast across the Northern Plains as we get into the first half of the work week” said Pfannkuch. “In south central Nebraska, Tuesday night through Thursday morning is expected to be the coldest period. Temperatures Wednesday morning are forecast to range anywhere from a few degrees above zero to near -10 degrees. Those temperatures combined with northerly winds will result in wind chills ranging from -15 to -30 degrees”, Pfannkuch said.

Morgan recommends knowing the forecast and preparing yourself and others to match the forecast. “Be sure to dress for the entire day, not just the warmest part, and always be prepared for it to turn cold at any time,” he said. “Don’t get caught not wearing enough protection.”

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (cdc.gov/disasters/winter) provides tips to prepare for winter weather, including:

- Dress warmly and limit exposure to the cold to prevent frostbite
- Avoid getting wet to prevent hypothermia
- Make sure your car is ready for winter travel
- Make winter emergency kits to keep in your car and in your home
- Install smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors in your home and make sure the batteries are working

Frostbite and hypothermia are serious health conditions. Frostbite is a bodily injury caused by freezing that results in loss of feeling and color in affected areas. It most often affects the nose, ears, cheeks, chin, fingers, or toes. Frostbite can permanently damage the body, and severe cases can lead to amputation.

Hypothermia is abnormally low body temperature, which is a dangerous condition that can occur when a person is exposed to extremely cold temperatures. Body temperature that is too low affects the brain, making the victim unable to think clearly or move well.

Morgan says taking preventive action is your best defense against having to deal with extreme cold-weather conditions. “By preparing your home and car in advance for winter emergencies, and by observing safety precautions during times of extremely cold weather, you can reduce the risk of weather-related health problems,” he said.

For more information, contact South Heartland District Health Department at 1-877-238-7595 or visit these websites: www.southheartlandhealth.org, www.cdc.gov/disasters/winter, <https://www.weather.gov/safety/winter>.

##