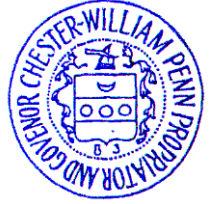




# THE COUNTY OF CHESTER



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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Chester County Department of Emergency Services Offers Cold Weather Health and Safety Tips**

West Chester, PA - With the arrival of frigid winter weather, Chester County Department of Emergency Services (CCDES) reminds residents to take necessary precautions to prevent serious health and safety concerns. Preparing for exposure to colder temperatures can mean the difference between staying healthy and the possibility of serious injury or even death.

When exposed to cold temperatures, the human body loses heat faster than it generates it. Prolonged exposure to cold eventually uses up the body's stored energy and can result in a serious condition called hypothermia, characterized by abnormally low body temperature. Hypothermia is most likely to occur at very cold temperatures, but can occur even at temperatures above 40° F, if a person becomes chilled from rain, sweat or submersion in cold water.

"Winter weather can cause many health related injuries like frostbite, hypothermia, and falling on slippery or icy sidewalks and paths," said Michael Murphy, Director, Chester County Department of Emergency Services. "Cold weather can also put an extra strain on the heart. People should make sure to dress warmly, keep outdoor trips brief and take breaks when shoveling or cleaning off cars."

Frostbite is another injury to the body caused by freezing, and results in a 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. The risk of frostbite is increased in people with reduced blood circulation and among people who are not dressed properly for extremely cold temperatures.

If you have heart disease or high blood pressure, follow your doctor's advice about shoveling snow or performing other outdoor activities in the cold. Otherwise, if you have to do active outdoor chores, dress warmly and work slowly. Since the body is working hard just to stay warm, it is possible to get overheated, as well.

CCDES officials recommend the following tips to help keep you and your family safe and healthy during extremely cold weather:

- Try to stay indoors when weather is extremely cold, especially if winds are high.
- If you must go outdoors, make trips outside as brief as possible.
- When going outside during very cold weather, adults and children should wear:
  - a hat
  - a scarf or knit mask to cover face and mouth

*The Mission of the Department of Emergency Services is to promote and assist in providing safety and security to Chester County citizens so they can work, live, and grow in a healthy and safe community.*

- sleeves that are snug at the wrist
- insulated and waterproof mittens or gloves
- several layers of loose-fitting, thermal wear or material that “wicks” moisture off the skin
- a water-resistant or tightly woven coat
- two layers of socks with boots or shoes that are waterproof and have a flexible sole

Walking on ice is also extremely dangerous. Many cold weather injuries result from falls on ice-covered sidewalks, steps, driveways and porches. Keep your steps and walkways as free from ice as possible by using rock salt or another chemical de-icing compound. Sand or cat litter can be used on walkways to reduce the risk of slipping.

To find more cold weather safety tips, visit <https://www.ready.gov/winter-weather>

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