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Quality Medical Care in the Comfort of Your Home

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## ***Cold Weather Prevention Program***

Alaska winter weather too often catches people unprepared. Each year, dozens of Americans die due to exposure to cold. According to researchers from the National Weather Service (NWS), 70 percent of the fatalities related to ice and snow occur in automobiles, and about 25 percent of all winter related fatalities are people that are caught off guard, out in the storm.

Wellspring Home Health Center recognizes the importance of cold weather prevention and has developed training, oversight, and procedures to help reduce the chances of injury. By taking these simple steps, the chances for cold weather injury or death is greatly reduced.

**What is Wind Chill Temperature?** It is the temperature it “feels like” outside and is based on the rate of heat loss from exposed skin caused by the effects of wind and cold. As the wind increases, the body is cooled at a faster rate causing the skin temperature to drop. Wind Chill does not impact inanimate objects like car radiators and exposed water pipes, because these objects cannot cool below the actual air temperature.

**What does this mean to me?** The NWS will inform you when Wind Chill conditions reach critical thresholds. A Wind Chill Warning is issued when wind chill temperatures are life threatening. A Wind Chill Advisory is issued when wind chill temperatures are potentially hazardous.

**What is Frostbite?** Frostbite is an injury to the body caused by freezing body tissue. The most susceptible parts of the body are the extremities such as fingers, toes, ear lobes, or the tip of the nose. Symptoms include a loss of feeling in the extremity and a white or pale appearance. Medical attention is needed immediately for frostbite. The area should be SLOWLY re-warmed.

**What is Hypothermia?** Hypothermia is abnormally low body temperature (below 95 degrees Fahrenheit). Warning signs include uncontrollable shivering, memory loss, disorientation, incoherence, slurred speech, drowsiness, and apparent exhaustion. Medical attention is needed immediately. If it is not available, begin warming the body SLOWLY.

### **Be Prepared Before the Storm Strikes**

#### **Dress for the Season**

✓ Wear layers of loose-fitting, lightweight, warm clothing. Trapped air between the layers will insulate you. Outer garments should be tightly woven, water repellent, and hooded.

✓ Wear a hat, because 40% of your body heat can be lost from your head.

- ✓ Cover your mouth to protect your lungs from extreme cold.
- ✓ Mittens, snug at the wrist, are better than gloves.
- ✓ Try to stay dry and out of the wind.
- ✓ Primary concerns are loss of heat, power and telephone service and a shortage of supplies if storm conditions continue for more than a day.

#### At Home and Work, have available:

- ✓ **Flashlight and extra batteries. Battery-powered Weather Radio** and portable radio to receive emergency information. These may be your only links to the outside.
- ✓ **Extra food and water.** Have high energy food, such as dried fruit, nuts, and granola bars, and food requiring no cooking or refrigeration.
- ✓ **Extra medicine and baby items. First-aid supplies.**
- ✓ **Heating fuel.** Refuel before you are empty. Fuel carriers may not reach you for days after a winter storm.
- ✓ **Emergency heat source:** fireplace, wood stove, space heater.
  - Use properly to prevent a fire.
  - Ventilate properly.
- ✓ **Fire extinguisher, smoke alarm.**
  - Test smoke alarms once a month to ensure they work properly.
- ✓ **Make sure pets have plenty of food, water and shelter.**

#### In Vehicles:

- ✓ **Plan your travel** and check the latest weather reports to avoid the storm.
- ✓ **Fully check and winterize** your vehicle before the winter season begins.
- ✓ **Carry a WINTER STORM SURVIVAL KIT:**
  - Mobile phone, charger, batteries, blankets/sleeping bags, flashlight with extra batteries, first-aid kit, knife, high-calorie, non-perishable food, extra clothing to keep dry.
  - Large empty can to use as emergency toilet. Tissues and paper towels for sanitary purposes, small can and waterproof matches to melt snow for drinking water.
  - Sack of sand or cat litter for traction, shovel, windshield scraper and brush, tool kit, tow rope, battery booster cables, water container, compass and road maps.
- ✓ **Keep your gas tank near full at all times** to avoid ice in the tank and fuel lines.
- ✓ **Avoid traveling alone. Let someone know your timetable** and primary and alternate routes.

#### On the Farm/Pets:

- ✓ **Move animals to sheltered areas.**
- ✓ Shelter belts, properly laid out and oriented, are better protection for cattle than confining shelters, such as sheds.
- ✓ **Haul extra feed to nearby feeding areas.**
- ✓ **Have water available.** Most animals die from dehydration in winter storms.
- ✓ **Make sure pets have plenty of food, water and shelter.**

### Wellspring Home Health Center, LLC

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