

State of New Jersey

Governor Phil Murphy

ICYMI: Murphy Administration Reminds Residents to Take Steps to Protect Their Health During Winter Weather

01/18/2019

From the New Jersey Department of Health:

TRENTON - With New Jersey expecting its first winter storm of the year this weekend, the New Jersey Department of Health would like to remind residents to prepare for possible power outages and hazardous conditions.

"Snow, rain, sleet and ice is expected in many areas of the state, it is important that residents take steps to protect themselves and their families," **said Health Commissioner Shereef Elnahal.**

To avoid cold-related illness and injury:

- Dress in layers while outdoors and wear a hat to help retain body heat. If you get wet, change into dry clothes as soon as possible.
- Drink fluids during periods of cold stress. Avoid drinking alcohol; it can accelerate the loss of body heat.
- Many cold-weather injuries result from falls on ice-covered sidewalks and other surfaces around the home. Use rock salt or other chemical de-icing compound to keep walkways, steps, driveways and porches as ice-free as possible.

"Avoid overexertion while shoveling, individuals with heart conditions should follow their doctor's advice before shoveling snow or performing other strenuous outdoor activities in the cold, as they may be at increased risk of a heart attack or other physical problems," **added the Commissioner.**

When shoveling snow:

- Ease into shoveling and warm up as if you are exercising. Don't over-exert yourself. Shoveling snow can raise your heart rate and blood pressure dramatically
- Push snow instead of lifting it
- Use your legs and not your back to lift snow
- Don't pick too much snow up at once. If the snow is wet and heavy, use a small shovel, or only fill one-fourth or one-half of a large shovel
- If you run out of breath, take a break
- If you feel tightness in your chest, stop shoveling immediately and call for medical assistance if symptoms persist

"With ice expected in the forecast, residents should also be prepared for possible power outages, **said Dr. Elnahal.**

"If you have a portable generator, it's important not to operate it too close to a home or inside a garage, basement of any enclosed space, dangerous - and possibly fatal - levels of carbon monoxide, (CO) can accumulate."

CO exposure can lead to headaches, sleepiness, fatigue, confusion and irritability at low levels. At higher levels, it can result in nausea, vomiting, irregular heartbeat, impaired vision and coordination, and death. If you suspect CO poisoning, take immediate action:

- Call 9-1-1 immediately if a person is not breathing, unconscious or unresponsive, or is having seizures or convulsions
- Exit the home, building or enclosed space immediately
- Contact your local fire department

- From a safe area, call the NJ Poison Information and Education System experts at 1-800-222-1222 for immediate treatment advice

Safety tips when using generators include:

- Never run a generator within a basement, garage or any enclosed or partially enclosed structure
- Never position a generator close to windows and doors
- Use battery-operated carbon monoxide alarms. Test and change the batteries regularly
- Never connect a generator directly to home wiring unless your home has been wired for generator use
- Always plug appliances directly into generators
- Use heavy-duty, outdoor-rated extension cords. Make sure extension cords are free of cuts or tears and the plug has three prongs
- Ensure your generator is properly grounded
- Never overload a generator. A portable generator should only be used when necessary to power essential equipment or appliances
- Turn off all equipment powered by a generator before shutting it down
- Keep the generator dry. Operate it on a dry surface under an open structure
- Always have a fully charged fire extinguisher nearby
- Never fuel a generator while it is operating and wait until it is cool to the touch
- Read and adhere to the manufacturer’s instructions for safe operation

If the power is out for longer than four hours, follow these food safety guidelines:

- For the freezer section: A freezer that is half full will hold food safely for up to 24 hours. A full freezer will hold food safely for 48 hours. Do not open the freezer door if you can avoid it.
- For the refrigerated section: Pack milk and other dairy products, meat, fish, eggs, gravy, and spoilable leftovers into a cooler surrounded by ice.
- Use a food thermometer to check the temperature of your food right before you cook or eat it. Throw away any food that has a temperature of more than 40 degrees.

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