

Home Heating Winter Safety Tips

When winter temperatures drop significantly below normal such as during a cold spell or during a long-term power outage, staying warm and safe can become a challenge. The Kentucky Department for Public Health (DPH) strongly encourages residents to follow these guidelines below to prevent injury, illness or death.

Carbon Monoxide Safety

Alternative heating sources such as portable generators, kerosene heaters, propane gas stoves and ovens heated with gasoline all have been used as heat sources indoors, which can lead to carbon monoxide poisoning.

- Don't use a generator, charcoal grill, camp stove or other gasoline or charcoal-burning device inside your home, basement, garage or near a window.
- Don't run a car or truck inside a garage attached to your house, even if you leave the door open.
- Don't burn items in a stove or fireplace that isn't properly vented. Don't heat your house with a gas oven.
- Don't place a portable heater within reach of children or pets and don't use a power strip or extension cord. Look for the Underwriter's Laboratory (UL) label and carefully read instructions before use.
- Install carbon monoxide detectors in your home and replace batteries as required. If the detector sounds, leave your home immediately and dial 911.
- Seek immediate medical attention by calling 911 if you suspect carbon monoxide poisoning and are experiencing symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning. Early symptoms include headache, nausea, vomiting and fatigue. Carbon monoxide poisoning is treatable.
- If you are experiencing symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning or if you have questions, call the Kentucky Poison Control hot line at (800) 222-1222.

Hypothermia

Hypothermia occurs when the body's temperature drops below what is necessary to achieve normal metabolism and other bodily functions. In severe cases or when the body is not warmed properly, death can result. People exposed to cold weather and those who aren't sufficiently prepared also are at an increased risk for the condition. To prevent hypothermia:

- Wear appropriate clothing. Layer clothes made of synthetic and wool fabrics, which are best for keeping warm. Always remember to wear hats, coats, scarves and gloves.
- Avoid consuming alcohol if outdoors. Alcohol can speed the loss of heat from the body. Avoid overexertion from activities that cause excessive sweat, which can lead to damp clothing, causing chills.
- Stay as dry as possible.
- Outdoor workers should make sure they are dressed appropriately and take frequent breaks to warm up and make sure their clothes are sufficient to keep them warm and dry.
- Symptoms of hypothermia include shivering, altered speech pattern, abnormally slow rate of breathing, cold pale skin and lethargy. Seek medical attention if you experiences signs of hypothermia. Individuals experiencing these symptoms should call 911 or seek medical attention immediately.

Food Safety

Refrigerated foods should be safe as long as power is out for no more than four hours.

- If an appliance thermometer was kept in the freezer, read the temperature when power comes back on. If the thermometer stored in the freezer reads 41 degrees Fahrenheit or below, the food is safe and may be refrozen.
- Throw out any perishable food in your refrigerator, such as meat, poultry, lunchmeats, fish, dairy products, eggs and any prepared or cooked foods that have been above 41 degrees Fahrenheit for four hours. If the food still contains ice crystals or is 41 degrees Fahrenheit or below, it is safe to refreeze.
- Fresh fruits and vegetables are safe as long as they are still firm and there is no evidence of mold or sliminess. Raw meats, poultry, cheese, juices, breads and pastries can be refrozen without losing too much food quality. Prepared food, fish, vegetables and fruits in the freezer can be refrozen safely, but food quality may suffer.
- To remove spills and freshen the freezer and refrigerator, DPH recommends washing with a solution of two tablespoons of baking soda dissolved in one quart of warm water. To absorb any lingering odors, place an open box or dish of baking soda in the appliance.

For more information concerning home heating winter safety, go to <http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/winter/staysafe/>.