



News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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EXTREME COLD WEATHER SAFETY TIPS

As all of us are keenly aware, the state of Louisiana is bracing for very uncommon extremely cold temperatures this week. All residents and citizens should prepare themselves, their families and their homes for the arctic winter blast heading to Louisiana.

The high cost of home heating fuels and utilities have caused many citizens to search for alternate sources of home heating. The use of wood burning stoves is growing and space heaters are selling rapidly, or coming out of storage. Fireplaces are burning wood and man-made logs. All these methods of heating may be acceptable. They are however, a major contributing factor in residential fires. Many of these fires can be prevented.

In the event of winter storm damage that knocks out electrical power, have a plan and course of action to ensure the safety of your family and all occupants of your home. Avoid makeshift heating, which can be dangerous – even life-threatening.

Operating a kitchen oven with the door propped open is extremely hazardous, especially with a gas appliance. If the flame goes out, gas continues to flow, creating a danger of carbon monoxide poisoning

The following fire safety tips can help you stay safe and maintain a fire safe home during this winter blast:

1. Dressing for cold weather:

- Wear several layers of loose fitting, lightweight clothing.
- Wear mittens instead of gloves. Wear a hat.
- Remember that entrapped, insulating air, warmed by body heat is the best protection from the cold.

2. Winterize Your Vehicle Early:

- Make sure that your car has adequate antifreeze.
- Make sure you have a good set of jumper cables
- Make sure that your tires have good traction and are inflated to the right pressure.
- Make sure that your heater and defroster work properly.
- Make sure that your battery is not more than 3 years old and that it can carry a full charge.

3. Carry a Winter-Survival Safety Kit in your vehicle if you plan to travel:

- Bring along blankets and a bright piece of cloth to tie on your antenna if you become stranded.
- Keep a Flashlight with spare batteries.
- Carry an extra change of clothing to keep dry.
- Pack a few non-perishable foods such as candy bars, canned goods, or high calorie food like Power Bars.

5. Before traveling:

- Check the latest weather forecast.
- Check the latest road conditions before you head out. Call LSP *511 or go to
- Let someone know where you are going and when you think you will reach your destination.

6. If you become stranded in your vehicle:

- Stay in your car, truck, or minivan.
- Run the engine at 10 minute intervals for heat.
- Maintain proper ventilation by making sure the exhaust pipe is not plugged.
- Leave the windows open slightly to avoid carbon monoxide poisoning.
- Use mobile phones to call for help or Dial 911 for emergency assistance.

8. If you lose Power and/or heat in your home:

- Include a home safety kit that includes extra non-perishable food, medicine, and a battery operated radio.
- Keep a flashlight and extra batteries handy.
- Avoid using electrical space heaters in bathrooms, or other areas where they may come in contact with water.
- Keep candles and matches handy for extended periods of electrical loss.
- Seal off any unused rooms by stuffing towels or rags in the cracks under the door.
- Cover the windows with blankets or sheets at night if you have some extras available.

9. Install and test smoke alarms in your home:

- Have fire extinguishers checked to combat an accidental fire due to the use of alternative heat sources
- Never use a range or an oven as a supplemental heating device. Not only is it a safety hazard, it can be a source of potentially toxic fumes.
- If you use an electric heater, be sure not to overload the circuit. Only use extension cords which have the necessary rating to carry the amp load. Choose an extension cord the same size or larger than the appliance electrical cord.
- Be sure every level of your home has a working smoke alarm, and be sure to check and clean it on a monthly basis.

Finally:

- Never burn charcoal indoors. Burning charcoal can give off lethal amounts of carbon monoxide and can lead to death.
- Keep flammable materials away from your fireplace mantel. A spark from the fireplace could easily ignite these materials.
- Before you go to sleep, be sure your fireplace fire is out. NEVER close your damper with hot ashes in the fireplace. A closed damper will help the fire to heat up again and will force toxic carbon monoxide into the house .
- Plan and practice a home escape plan with your family.
- Contact your local fire department or the State Fire Marshal's office for advice if you have a question on Home Fire Safety.

“Winter storms and below zero temperatures in Louisiana are not very common, everyone is potentially at risk”, stated Louisiana State Fire Marshal H. “Butch” Browning, Jr. “However the actual threat to you depends on your specific situation. Extreme cold weather can present serious problems, but with a little careful planning, preparedness and common sense can help prevent many of these problems and make you and your family a lot safer”, he concluded.