



Pat Quinn, Governor
Charles D. Johnson, Director

421 East Capitol Avenue, #100, Springfield, Illinois 62701-1789
217-785-3356, Fax: 217-785-4477 • www.state.il.us/aging

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CONTACT:
Kimberly Parker 312-814-1577

Department on Aging Provides Tips to Keep Seniors Safe and Warm This Winter

Find how to “Keep Warm” at 1-877-411-WARM or www.keepwarm.illinois.gov

SPRINGFIELD — On this first day of winter, Illinois Department on Aging Director Charles D. Johnson is encouraging older people and their families to recognize that winter poses a special threat to seniors.

“Seniors should get their furnace checked each year to make sure it’s working properly,” said Director Johnson. “The state has a number of resources available that seniors can use so they aren’t left to make difficult decisions like, whether to pay their heating bills or take their prescription medications this winter. I hope that older persons, their families and those who care for them will take these practical, simple steps to prepare for the colder temps ahead.”

Seniors should make sure they set their thermostats above 65 degrees. Older persons are at a higher risk to falling ill during the cold winter months. People who lower the thermostat to reduce heating bills risk developing hypothermia, a potentially fatal condition in which the body temperature drops dangerously low. At increased risk are older people who take certain medications, drink alcohol, lack proper nutrition and who have conditions such as arthritis, stroke, Alzheimer’s disease and Parkinson’s disease.

In addition to winterizing the home, people ages 50 and older are urged to get an annual flu shot, since they are considered at risk for seasonal flu. And H1N1 vaccinations are now available to seniors who want them.

In dealing with cold weather, seniors are encouraged to:

- Dress in layers, both indoors and outdoors.
- Keep active. Make a list of exercises and activities to do indoors when you can’t get out.
- Eat well & drink 10 glasses of water daily; Stock up on extra non-perishable food supplies, just in case.
- Keep extra medications in the house. If this is not possible, make arrangements now to have your medications delivered.
- Have your house winterized. Be sure that walls and attics are insulated. Caulk and weather-strip doors and windows. Insulate pipes near outer walls, in crawl spaces and attics that are susceptible to freezing.
- Make sure you and your family knows how to shut off the water supply in case pipes burst.

- Prepare your vehicle by checking wipers, tires, lights and fluid levels regularly. Keep a windshield scraper and small broom for ice and snow removal. Maintain at least a half tank of gas during the winter season. Plan long trips carefully and travel by daylight with at least one other person.
- Protect against fire. If you don't have a fire extinguisher, buy one. Make sure space heaters are at least three feet from anything flammable. Do not overload extension cords.
- Do not shovel snow or walk in deep snow. Plan now for someone else to shovel the snow. The strain from the cold and hard labor could cause a heart attack; sweating can lead to a chill and even hypothermia.

For more information about program services to assist older adults in Illinois and their caregivers, call the Department on Aging Senior HelpLine at 1-800-252-8966 or for TTY (hearing impaired use only) call 1-888-206-1327.

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