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County Residents Urged to Protect Themselves and Pets against Extreme Cold

STOCKTON, CA (January 15, 2013) – San Joaquin County residents can expect very cold weather over the next week or more, particularly overnight, and should take steps to protect themselves, their pets, and livestock, according to San Joaquin County Public Health Services. “Taking precautions and making preparations for extremely cold weather will reduce the risk of weather-related health injuries,” said County Health Officer, Dr. Karen Furst.

“Exposure to extreme cold can cause injury or serious health conditions. Those especially at risk during cold weather include seniors, infants, and other vulnerable people,” said Dr. Furst. Tips to stay healthy and safe during cold weather include the following:

- Maintain a heated environment inside you home. Have extra blankets on hand. Be aware that space heaters can be a fire risk. Choose heaters with an automatic shut-off switch and non-glowing elements.
- If you do not have heat, go to a friend or family member’s home or local shelter.
- Do not bring outdoor heating devices into the home (e.g. barbecues and other cooking equipment) because they can produce deadly carbon monoxide (visit CDC web <http://www.cdc.gov/CDCTV/QuietKiller/index.html>).
- Regularly check on family members or neighbors who are elderly or have special needs, especially if they live alone.
- If you live alone, keep in contact with friends and family.
- Wear several layers of lightweight and warm clothing, a hat and mittens, and cover your mouth with a scarf to protect your lungs when outside.
- Avoid heavy exertion in the cold; cold weather can put added strain on the heart. If you must work outdoors, dress warmly and work slowly.
- Be cautious when traveling; check road conditions before traveling and let others know of your route and estimated time of arrival. Keep extra blankets, food and water in your vehicle.
- Move family pets indoors or to an enclosure out of the elements. Likewise, protect livestock or other large animals from the cold weather. Make sure they have access to unfrozen water.
- Insulate pipes and allow faucets to drip slowly during cold weather to avoid freezing; learn how to shut off water valves (in case a pipe bursts).

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The most common cold-related health problems are frostbite and hypothermia:

- **Frostbite** results in a loss of feeling and color in affected areas of the body. It most often affects the nose, ears, cheeks, chin, fingers, or toes and can permanently damage the body.
- **Hypothermia** occurs when the body is exposed to very cold temperatures and begins to lose heat. In adults, hypothermia can appear as shivering, confusion, memory loss, fumbling hands, numbness or slurred speech. Children may have very low energy and cold skin that appears red. If any of these signs appear, the person's temperature should be checked. Individuals with temperatures below 95 degrees Fahrenheit require medical attention immediately. San Joaquin County residents who have an emergency related to the cold weather should call 911.

Other common symptoms of cold-related health problems to be aware of include: stiff muscles, slowed breathing, dizziness, puffy face and waxy or discolored skin. If you need emergency medical attention, call your physician or 9-1-1 immediately.

County officials will continue to monitor the weather conditions. Additional tips to stay healthy and safe during cold weather are available on the San Joaquin County Public Health Services website, <http://www.sjcphs.org/>.

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Attachment: [Extreme Cold – A Prevention Guide to Promote Your Personal Health and Safety](#)