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MEMA OFFERS PRECAUTIONS FOR APPROACHING EXTREME COLD WEATHER

FRAMINGHAM, MA – "The National Weather Service (NWS) is forecasting bitter cold temperatures throughout the Commonwealth for the remainder of the week. As the temperatures continue to plummet, wind chills are expected to reach -15 to -30 degrees in some areas," stated Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) Director Kurt Schwartz. "To that end, MEMA presents these cold weather safety tips."

- Continue to be aware of extreme weather conditions by monitoring Media reports.

- Make sure you always have a well-stocked Winter Home Emergency Supply Kit that includes flashlights, portable radio, extra batteries, a first aid kit, bottled water, non-perishable food and a manual can opener.

- Minimize outside activities, particularly the elderly and very young. Also, consider your pets.

- Dress in several layers of loose-fitting, lightweight clothing, rather than a single layer of heavy clothing. Outer garments should be tightly woven and water repellent. Wear a hat, mittens and sturdy waterproof boots, protecting your extremities. Cover your mouth with a scarf to protect your lungs.

- Excessive exposure can lead to frostbite, which is damaging to body tissue that is frozen. Frostbite causes a loss of feeling and a pale appearance in extremities, such as fingers, toes, ear lobes or the tip of the nose. If symptoms are detected, seek medical help immediately.

- Hypothermia can occur in extreme cases. The warning signs are uncontrollable shivering, memory loss, disorientation, incoherence, slurred speech, drowsiness and apparent exhaustion. If the person's temperature drops below 95 degrees, seek immediate medical care.

- Ensure you have sufficient heating fuel, as well as emergency heating equipment in case you lose electricity.

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- When utilizing alternate heating sources, such as your fireplace, wood stove or space heater, take the necessary safety precautions. Keep a fire extinguisher handy; ensuring everyone knows how to use it properly. Test smoke alarms and Carbon Monoxide (CO) detectors.

- If you lose your heat, seal off unused rooms by stuffing towels in the cracks under the doors. At night, cover windows with extra blankets or sheets.

- Food provides the body with energy for producing its own heat.

- Be a good neighbor. Check with elderly or relatives and friends who may need additional assistance to ensure their safety.

- To keep pipes from freezing, wrap them in insulation or layers of newspapers, covering the newspapers with plastic to keep out moisture. Allow a trickle of warm water to run from a faucet that is farthest from your water meter or one that has frozen in the past. This will keep the water moving so that it cannot freeze. Learn how to shut off your water if a pipe bursts.

- If pipes freeze, remove insulation, completely open all faucets and pour hot water over the pipes or wrap them with towels soaked in hot water, starting where they are most exposed to the cold. A hand-held hair dryer, used with caution, also works well.

- Make sure your car is properly winterized. Keep the gas tank at least half-full. Carry a Winter Emergency Car Kit in the trunk including blankets, extra clothing, flashlight with spare batteries, a can and waterproof matches (to melt snow for drinking water), non-perishable foods, windshields scraper, shovel, sand, towrope and jumper cables.

MEMA is the state agency charged with ensuring the state is prepared to withstand, respond to, and recover from all types of emergencies and disasters, including natural hazards, accidents, deliberate attacks, and technological and infrastructure failures. MEMA's staff of professional planners, communications specialists and operations and support personnel is committed to an all hazards approach to emergency management. For additional information about MEMA and Winter Preparedness, go to www.mass.gov/mema. Continue to follow MEMA updates on *Twitter* at www.twitter.com/MassEMA; *Facebook* at www.facebook.com/MassachusettsEMA; and *YouTube* at www.youtube.com/MassachusettsEMA. Download the free *Massachusetts Alerts!* app to your Smartphone to receive important weather alerts and messages from MEMA. Easy instructions are available at www.mass.gov/mema/mobileapp

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