



## Benton County Fire Protection District No. 4

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: November 12, 2015  
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#### **EMS calls on the rise when temperatures fall**

*Tips to avoid winter-weather injuries*

[West Richland, Wash.] – As temperatures begin to drop, Benton County Fire District 4 reminds people to be careful and offers tips for avoiding weather-related injuries.

Personnel respond to emergency medical calls during winter months because of injuries related to chillier weather. In 2013, there were 199 calls for emergency medical service during winter months. In 2014, that number climbed to 255.

And, ambulance response times are three minutes faster on average since 2010. That's when voters approved an Emergency Medical Services (EMS) levy to fund Basic and Advanced Life Support services with EMTs and Paramedics for local residents. Community support through the levy has helped the fire district staff a second station full-time, which is why responses are faster.

You can always call 911 if you or someone you know is injured. In the meantime, these tips can help you stay warm and safe this winter season and reduce your chances of injury.

#### **Exercising in cold weather**

Warm up your muscles for at least 10 minutes before heading outside for physical activity by doing light stretches. This will help prevent injuries, including serious ones such as a heart attack. Wear clothing material made of synthetic materials and avoid cotton to conserve body heat. Also, add layers when exercising in frigid weather. Once your body temperature starts to rise, you can shed clothing layers.

#### **Clear ice and snow from common areas**

Slips and falls can be avoided by clearing snow and ice from sidewalks and driveways. Add salt or sand to icy spots. When removing snow from walkways, choose a shovel suited for your body height to avoid back strain. Keep your back straight and do not throw snow over your shoulder. Instead, carry it to where you want to discard it. People with a history of heart problems should avoid this activity.

#### **Prevent carbon monoxide poisoning**

A simple way to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning is to install carbon monoxide alarms on each floor of your house. If the power should go out, do not warm your home with portable fuel-burning appliances, such as grills or those used for camping. Call a neighbor or go to an area shelter. Make sure fireplace flues are open to allow gases to escape and have your central heating system serviced each year. Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning include nausea, dizziness, severe headache, confusion and unconsciousness.

## **Prepare for winter storms**

Keep an emergency kit in the home for when the power goes out. Include a battery-powered radio, flashlights or lanterns with extra batteries, drinking water, nonperishable food that doesn't require cooking, baby and pet food (if needed), prescription medication, and a first aid kit.

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*Benton County Fire District 4 provides Fire and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) to 17,000 people over 52 square miles, including the City of West Richland. Approximately 36 volunteer and career Firefighters, Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) and six Paramedics respond to an average of 1,200 calls per year.*