

Caregiver Assistance News

“CARING FOR YOU... CARING FOR OTHERS”

Fire Safety - Staying Warm at Home

Severe weather can take us by surprise. With critical services disrupted by cold weather, electric grids may be crippled by unexpected weather events, putting people at risk of losing power. A weather crisis combined with the Covid pandemic can make you want to panic, but your goal is to be able to identify what the current situation is in your area, and deal with what you *need* to do to keep the person in your care and your family safe.

Many winter storms are accompanied by dangerously low temperatures. Regardless of the severity of a winter storm, you should **be prepared** to remain safe during these events.

When exposed to cold temperatures, your body begins to lose heat faster than it can produce. Prolonged exposure to cold will eventually use up your body's stored energy. The result is **hypothermia**, or abnormally low body temperature. A body temperature that is *too low* affects the brain, making the victim unable to think clearly or move well. This makes hypothermia particularly dangerous because a person may not know it is happening and will not be able to do anything about it.

To Prevent Hypothermia

☞ Keep the **house temperature** no lower than 65° F (at 70° F if the person is ill).

☞ Have him wear **warm clothes**, and place leg warmers on his arms and legs for extra warmth. Use **warm blankets** when the person is in bed.

☞ Wear a **warm hat** outside or a knit hat indoors to keep the body from losing heat.

☞ Provide a balanced **diet**.

☞ **Keep moving** by walking around the house or down an apartment hallway, lifting and stretching legs and arms.



Signs of Hypothermia

Signs include impaired judgment, shivering, cold pale skin, slow breathing and pulse, slurred or mumbled speech, weakness, drowsiness, loss of coordination, fumbling hands, stumbling steps, confusion and memory loss. Fifty percent of hypothermia deaths occur in seniors over the age of 75. Even mild cold can cause hypothermia in the elderly because of compromised circulation or respiratory conditions.

If hypothermia signs are present:

1. Wrap the person in blankets, notify the doctor, give warm fluids, and increase room temperature.
2. Avoid rubbing the person's skin.

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3. Do *not* re-warm the person rapidly. Use a heater on low or warm hot water bottles (wrapped in a towel) on the chest and abdomen.
4. Do *not* give the person alcohol or caffeine. Be alert to signs of heart attack. (Chest pain, shortness of breath, discomfort in the jaw, bluish pale skin, sweating and nausea. **Call 911 immediately if hypothermia or heart attack symptoms are present.**)

Carbon Monoxide Detectors and Smoke Alarms

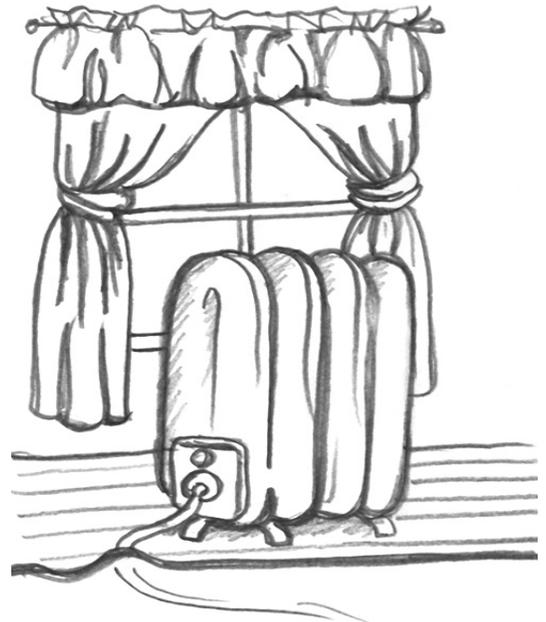
A leaky gas stove can give off dangerous levels of carbon monoxide. Cars left running in a garage and malfunctioning gas stoves, gas dryers and fuel-fired furnaces can all release dangerous levels of carbon monoxide. Install a carbon monoxide detector and check the smoke alarm batteries. They can save a life.

Winter Fire Safety Tips

House fires occur more frequently in the winter due to lack of proper safety precautions when using alternate heating sources (unattended fires, disposal of ashes too soon, improperly placed space heaters, etc.). Fire during winter storms presents a great danger because water supplies may freeze and it may be difficult for firefighting equipment to get to the fire.

Check your **furnace** filter each month and change when necessary. Have the furnace serviced every year.

- ✓ If you use gas, wood, or kerosene heaters, make sure gases are vented to the outside.
- ✓ Remove dust from radiators each month and keep furniture and drapes away from radiators.
- ✓ Keep **space heaters** away from any flammable objects. Do not keep them on carpets or flammable surfaces or near water. Check the cord for fraying. Don't use extension cords or run electrical cords under carpets.
- ✓ Don't use the kitchen stove to heat the home—it is dangerous.
- ✓ Install a programmable thermostat to make the home more energy efficient.
- ✓ Insulate water pipes to avoid freezing and bursting. Running water, even at a trickle, helps prevent pipes from freezing. Open kitchen and bathroom cabinet doors to allow warmer air to circulate around the plumbing.
- ✓ Take advantage of local heating assistance funds and utility *no-cutoff* programs.



Taking Care of Yourself— The Value of Telling Family Stories

Remembering past events in one's life is something valuable and therapeutic for the elderly and their families. By being able to relate their past, elderly people become more alert and feel less depressed. It improves self-esteem and makes the person have a more positive outlook for the future.

The process of writing past events can also pave the way to shake off some of the past, and elders are able to think differently about their lives. Be it individually or in structured groups, life-writing encourages recollection of family relationships, career accomplishments, and major turning points in life.

Taking it a step further, you can hire a ghost writer at StoryTerrace.com who will interview you and write your story while you upload photos for your finished book.



Live Life Laughing!

I say, if a man brings his wife flowers for no reason—there's a reason!



Inspiration

Nobody can go back and start a new beginning, but anyone can start today and make a new ending.

Memory Care - Cold Awareness

Be aware, people with dementia may not dress appropriately for the weather or understand the risk of cold weather.

Caregiving in The Comfort of Home®

Our Purpose

To provide caregivers with critical information enabling them to do their job with confidence, pride, and competence.

Ordering Info

From the publishers of

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800-565-1533
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SAFETY TIPS— Plan and Prepare for Winter Emergencies

- ✓ Identify **temporary** living arrangements in case you are unable to stay in your own home and have a plan for getting there. Share emergency contact information *beforehand* with everyone who would need it.
- ✓ Plan for your **medical needs**. Have extra medications on hand or identify a pharmacy that will deliver them to you.
- ✓ Have **food and water** such as canned food, a can opener and one gallon of water per person per day.
- ✓ Keep batteries and battery powered **flashlights** available and, when needed, use flashlights instead of candles.
- ✓ If you have medical equipment, be sure you know how to maintain it or move it in an emergency.

For a free brochure on Winter Warmth and Safety: Home Energy Tips for Older Adults, call the Eldercare Locator at 800-677-1116 or download it at https://eldercare.acl.gov/Public/Resources/Booklets/docs/Winter_Tips.pdf

Source: CDC; American Red Cross