



**Commonwealth of Kentucky
Cabinet for Health and Family Services**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**First 72 On You - Be Prepared to Stay Safe and Healthy
in Cold Temps**

*Increased risks for carbon monoxide poisoning, hypothermia, foodborne illness, host
Facebook Live Discussion*

FRANKFORT, Ky. (Nov. 15, 2018) – As part of the year-long *First 72 On You* campaign, the Department for Public Health (DPH), within the Cabinet for Health and Family Services (CHFS), is spotlighting cold weather preparedness efforts to remind Kentuckians of the dangers of carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning, hypothermia and foodborne illness from possible power outages and cold weather conditions.

A Facebook Live discussion on this important topic will be held on Friday, Nov. 16 at 1 p.m. (Eastern). Watch on the Cabinet’s Facebook page:
<http://www.facebook.com/kychfs>.

“When temperatures drop significantly below normal such as during a cold spell or during a long-term power outage, staying warm and safe can become a challenge,” said Jeffrey Howard Jr., M.D., DPH commissioner. “Carbon monoxide poisoning and hypothermia are deadly and should be taken seriously. We urge Kentuckians to take steps to prevent exposure to both cold temperatures and carbon monoxide by avoiding

using alternative heating sources like propane heaters, gas-powered stoves and charcoal grills while indoors. It can be a matter of life or death.”

Officials at DPH strongly encourage residents to follow these guidelines below to prevent injury, illness or death:

Carbon Monoxide Safety

- Avoid using alternative heating sources such as portable generators, kerosene heaters, propane gas stoves and ovens heated with gasoline indoors because this can lead to carbon monoxide poisoning.
- Don't use a generator, charcoal grill, camp stove or other gasoline or charcoal-burning device inside your home, basement, garage or near a window.
- Don't run a car or truck inside a garage attached to your house, even if you leave the door open.
- Don't burn items in a stove or fireplace that isn't properly vented.
- Don't heat your house with a gas oven.
- Don't place a portable heater within reach of children or pets and don't use a power strip or extension cord. Look for the Underwriter's Laboratory (UL) label and carefully read instructions before use.
- Install carbon monoxide detectors in your home and replace batteries as required. If the detector sounds, leave your home immediately and dial 911.
- Seek immediate medical attention by calling 911 if you are experiencing symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning. Initial symptoms include headache, nausea, vomiting and fatigue. If recognized early, carbon monoxide poisoning is treatable.
- If you are experiencing symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning or if you have questions, call the Kentucky Poison Control hot line at (800) 222-1222.

Hypothermia

Hypothermia occurs when the body's temperature drops below what is necessary to achieve normal metabolism and other bodily functions. In severe cases or when the

body is not warmed properly, death can result. People exposed to and not sufficiently prepared for cold weather also are at an increased risk for hypothermia.

Important steps to prevent hypothermia include:

- Wear appropriate clothing. Layer clothes made of synthetic and wool fabrics, which are best for keeping warm. Always remember to wear hats, coats, scarves and gloves.
- Avoid consuming alcohol if outdoors. Alcohol can speed the loss of heat from the body. Avoid overexertion from activities that cause excessive sweat, which can lead to damp clothing, causing chills. Stay as dry as possible.
- Outdoor workers should make sure they are dressed appropriately and take frequent breaks to warm up and ensure their clothes are sufficient to keep them warm and dry.
- Symptoms of hypothermia include shivering, altered speech pattern, abnormally slow rate of breathing; cold, pale skin; and lethargy. Seek medical attention if you experience signs of hypothermia. Individuals experiencing these symptoms should call 911 or seek medical attention immediately.

Food Safety

- Refrigerated foods should be safe as long as power is out for no more than four hours.
- If an appliance thermometer was kept in the freezer, read the temperature when power comes back on. If the thermometer stored in the freezer reads 41 degrees Fahrenheit or below, the food is safe and may be refrozen.
- Throw out any perishable food in your refrigerator, such as meat, poultry, lunchmeats, fish, dairy products, eggs and any prepared or cooked foods that have been above 41 degrees Fahrenheit for four hours or more. If the food still contains ice crystals or is 41 degrees Fahrenheit or below, it is safe to refreeze.
- Fresh fruits and vegetables are safe as long as they are still firm and there is no evidence of mold or sliminess. Raw meats, poultry, cheese, juices, breads and pastries can be refrozen without losing too much food quality. Prepared food,

fish, vegetables and fruits in the freezer can be refrozen safely, but food quality may suffer.

- To remove spills and freshen the freezer and refrigerator, DPH recommends washing with a solution of two tablespoons of baking soda dissolved in one quart of warm water. To absorb any lingering odors, place an open box or dish of baking soda in the appliance.

Questions for the **First 72 On You** Facebook Live discussion with state public health officials can be emailed in advance to chfs.communications@ky.gov or posted in the comments section during the event at <http://www.facebook.com/kychfs>.

More information about how to stay safe and healthy in cold weather can be found on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's website at <https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/winter/index.html>.

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The Cabinet for Health and Family Services is home to most of the state's human services and healthcare programs, including the Department for Medicaid Services, the Department for Community Based Services the Department for Public Health, the Department for Aging and Independent Living and the Department for Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities. CHFS is one of the largest agencies in state government, with nearly 8,000 full- and part-time employees located across the Commonwealth focused on improving the lives and health of Kentuckians.