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## PRESS RELEASE

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## IL Department on Aging Tips for Winter Weather Preparedness

*Health hazards to be aware of during the winter that could affect older adults*

**Springfield, IL** – To prepare for the dangers of the winter weather storms predicted over the next few days, the Illinois Department on Aging (IDoA) today urged older Illinoisans and their families to recognize that winter poses a special threat to seniors and has compiled a list of tips and signs to look out for to avoid serious safety and health complications. The environmental conditions during winter in Illinois poses a health risk to all residents, especially those in the older adult community. Older residents who do not have full mobility or live in isolation should have a plan of action in emergency weather conditions, such as snow storms and extremely cold temperatures. Those living in isolation should also have a contact to check in with during extreme winter weather situations.

IDoA has identified some health problems that can be brought on by severe winter weather:

### INFLUENZA

- The "flu" is a contagious respiratory infection. Symptoms include fever, chills, cough, sore throat, runny nose and soreness and aching in the back, arms and legs.
- For older persons who have a chronic health problem, the flu can result in serious complications, such as pneumonia.
- Flu shots are recommended for all persons aged 65 years and older and for those who suffer from chronic health problems, such as heart disease, respiratory problems, renal disease, diabetes, anemia or any disease that weakens the body's immune system (**consult your doctor before getting a flu shot on your own**).

### HYPOTHERMIA

- This is a condition brought on when the body temperature drops to 95 degrees or less.

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[www.illinois.gov/aging](http://www.illinois.gov/aging)

The Illinois Department on Aging does not discriminate in admission to programs or treatment of employment in programs or activities in compliance with appropriate State and Federal statutes. If you feel you have been discriminated against, call the Senior HelpLine at 1-800-252-8966; 1-888-206-1327 (TTY)

- Symptoms include slow or slurred speech, incoherence, memory loss, disorientation, uncontrollable shivering, drowsiness, repeated stumbling and apparent exhaustion.
- It is recommended that older persons should not set their thermostats below 65 degrees during the winter months.
- **Even mild indoor temperatures of 60 - 65 degrees can trigger hypothermia.**

## **FROSTBITE**

- Exposed areas of the face (cheeks, nose, chin and forehead), ears, wrists, hands and feet are most affected by frostbite.
- Symptoms are loss of feeling and a white or pale appearance to the skin.
- To treat frostbite, warm the affected part of the body gradually. Wrap the frostbitten area in blankets, sweaters, coats, etc.
- **Caution: Do not rub the affected areas, severe damage to the tissue can occur.**

The State of Illinois offers warming centers for all individuals to escape the harsh winter cold. Local warming centers can be found at: <https://www2.illinois.gov/sites/KeepWarm/SitePages/WarmingCenters.aspx>, or by calling the toll-free Keep Warm Illinois hotline at 1-877-411-WARM.

Please visit the IDoA website for more information on winter storm safety preparedness at: [https://www.illinois.gov/aging/Documents/winter\\_storm\\_preparedness\\_guidebook.pdf](https://www.illinois.gov/aging/Documents/winter_storm_preparedness_guidebook.pdf)

For more information about program services to assist older adults in Illinois and their caregivers, contact the Department on Aging **Senior HelpLine at (800) 252-8966.**

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