

**IEMA, National Weather Service Encourage
People to Prepare for Winter Weather**
November is Winter Weather Preparedness Month in Illinois

SPRINGFIELD – Frosty temperatures have already destroyed the blooms on many summer plants, a sure sign that winter weather isn't far away. While it's not yet time to start shoveling snow, the Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA) and the National Weather Service (NWS) are encouraging people to begin preparing now for extreme cold, snow and ice.

IEMA and the NWS will highlight winter weather preparedness throughout November as part of their annual Winter Weather Preparedness campaign.

“In Illinois, it's a question of when snow, ice and sub-zero temperatures will hit, not if they will occur,” said IEMA Director Jonathon Monken. “Getting caught unprepared may not be just inconvenient, it could be dangerous. Now's the time to take a few minutes to put together your home and vehicle emergency supply kits and review the steps you should take to stay safe during hazardous winter weather.”

According to the NWS, there were eight deaths related to extreme cold temperatures nationwide in calendar year 2012. That number is significantly lower than the 10-year national average of 27 fatalities. All of the 2012 cold-related fatalities occurred outdoors, including three deaths in Illinois.

Since 1995, 134 fatalities related to cold temperatures have occurred in Illinois, making it the second-leading cause of weather-related deaths in Illinois in the past 18 years.

“There are several dangerous health conditions that can occur in winter weather,” said Illinois Department of Public Health Director Dr. LaMar Hasbrouck. “It's important to watch for signs of being too cold or over exertion. Hypothermia, when a person's body temperature drops below 95 degrees Fahrenheit, can occur both outdoors and indoors and can be fatal. Frostbite, when skin becomes stiff and numb, can cause tissue damage. And watch for signs of over exertion, such as chest pain, when shoveling snow. Know the warning signs of dangerous cold weather health conditions in order to stay safe and healthy during the winter.”

To help Illinois residents prepare for winter, IEMA, the NWS and the American Red Cross developed a winter weather preparedness guide that covers winter weather terms and tips for staying safe at home, in the car and at school. The guide is available on the Ready Illinois website at www.Ready.Illinois.gov or by calling 217-785-9925.

“Preparing well in advance of winter weather is really the best way to cope when snow, ice and cold temperatures affect us,” said Chris Miller, Warning Coordination Meteorologist with the NWS office in Lincoln. “Now is the time to prepare your vehicle and house for winter conditions. Make sure you have blankets, non-perishable food, boots, extra clothing and other items in your car to ride out the storm in case you are stranded or waiting for a tow. At home, make sure you have enough essential items to ride out a storm, in some cases without power, for three days at the very least.”

For more information about winter weather preparedness, including the *Weathering Winter* guide from the Illinois Department of Public Health, visit the Ready Illinois website at www.Ready.Illinois.gov.