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Winter Weather Awareness Day Focuses on Preparation

NOVEMBER 16TH 2014 BY DEE LOFLIN

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**Winter Weather Awareness Day is November 19th.
Focuses on Preparing NOW for Severe Winter Weather**

Missourians encouraged consider and prepare for all winter weather hazards when making their plans!

This week's frigid temperatures and forecasts calling for accumulating snow are excellent reminders that it's time for Missourians to think about and prepare for winter weather. When winter does arrive, it will bring an assortment of potentially dangerous conditions for which Missourians should be ready to deal with. That's why the National Weather Service has set Nov. 19 as Winter Weather Awareness Day.

"Missourians should always be mindful of the dangers associated with severe winter weather and be prepared for driving on snow and ice-covered roads, losing power and heat at home, and understanding frostbite and hypothermia," said Ron Walker, director of the State Emergency Management Agency.

Winter Weather Awareness Day is sponsored by the National Weather Service, along with the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services, the State Emergency Management Agency and Missouri's emergency management directors.

Here are some of the winter storm preparations Missourians should make:

- Create a family emergency plan and an emergency kit. These kits should include bottled water, canned and dry foods, battery-powered radio, flashlights, extra batteries, manual can opener and a first-aid kit.
- Assemble a separate vehicle winter emergency kit. Include a blanket, radio with spare batteries, snacks or energy-type food, jumper cables, flares, shovel and sand or shingles to give tires traction.
- Make sure alternate heat and power sources, such as fireplaces, woodstoves, oil heaters and generators function properly, are safely operated and that adequate fuel is on hand. Carbon monoxide detectors should be properly installed throughout the home. Only operate generators outdoors.
- Avoid driving when conditions include sleet, freezing rain or drizzle, snow or dense fog. If travel is necessary, make sure an emergency kit is in the vehicle, that cell phones are charged and important emergency numbers are saved for fast dialing in an emergency. If your vehicle breaks down or slides off the road, stay with your vehicle and call for help.
- Protect against frostbite and hypothermia by wearing warm, loose-fitting, lightweight clothing in several layers. Stay indoors, if possible.

People should also be aware of the weather forecast and understand the different terms the National Weather Service uses when issuing weather advisories:

- Winter Storm Watch indicates that severe winter weather may affect your area within 12-48 hours.
- Winter Storm Warning indicates severe winter weather is in the area or expected immediately and can be life threatening.
- Ice Storm Warnings are issued for ice accumulations of a quarter-inch or more.

Additional information about winter weather and preparedness tips can be found at the following websites:

- National Weather Service - St. Louis Winter Weather Awareness Page:
www.crh.noaa.gov/lx/?n=winterday

SEMA: www.sema.dps.mo.gov (Click on "Severe Winter Weather" in the "Plan and Prepare" section.)

Missouri Dept. of Transportation's Travel Information Map: **www.modot.mo.gov**

Missouri Ready in 3 Program's Weather Preparedness Page:
<http://health.mo.gov/emergencies/readyin3/weather.php>

Missouri Ready in 3 Program also provides free family safety guides to help prepare your family and household:
<http://health.mo.gov/emergencies/readyin3/pdf/familyguideenglish.pdf>, or call (573) 526-4768 to order a free family safety guide. The family safety guide is available in several languages.

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