



CAHF'S READY, SET, GO!

EXTREME COLD



GET READY! Create a Facility "Action Plan" for Extreme Cold

Extremely cold temperatures often accompany a winter storm, bringing with it power failures, and problems with transportation due to impacted roads. Are you ready to protect yourself and your facility?

Does your plan address?

- Chain of command for emergencies
- Roles of staff in case of power outages, and/or short staffing due to closed roads
- Internal/external communications including weather channels and phone number for road conditions (contact CALTRANS 1-800-427-7623)
- "Triggers" for the initiation of cold-related emergency measures, such as:
 - ⇒ Disruption of heating systems due to power outage
 - ⇒ Inside temperatures drop to uncomfortable level
- Back-up power in case of power outage including an approved alternate heat source
- Additional battery operated lighting, phones, and radios available in the event of an extended power loss
- Meals (Non-perishable foods and/or preparation and serving) for power outage
 - ⇒ Warm blankets and clothing to dress residents and staff in protective layers

GET SET! Are you and your staff really ready?

- Develop an assessment protocol for all residents to be implemented when emergency trigger for cold temp is reached, such as:
 - ⇒ Vital signs with focus on core temp for those at risk
 - ⇒ Frequent comfort checks of all residents
- Discuss signs and symptoms of hypothermia and frost bite with staff (see "Additional Tips & Information" section on page 2)
- Discuss what to do during an extreme cold event with residents, such as layering protective clothes
- Keep heat sources at least 3 feet away from furniture and drapes
- Never leave residents near a space heater unattended
- Have the following safety equipment:
 - ⇒ Chemical fire extinguisher
 - ⇒ Smoke alarm in working order (check once a month and change batteries once a year)
 - ⇒ Easy-to-read indoor thermometer

GO!

- Activate policies and plans to deal with extreme temperatures
- Check rooms often to ensure that heating system is operating effectively
- Conserve Heat. **Provide for proper** ventilation, but keep as much heat as possible inside your building by avoiding unnecessary opening of doors or windows. Close off un-occupied rooms, keep windows covered
- Warm beverages such as broth help maintain body temperature. **Avoid caffeine or alcohol**
- Check regularly on patients, monitor their comfort and temps to be sure they stay warm. Older adults often make less body heat because of a slower metabolism and less physical activity
- Report change of condition immediately to MD (Medical Director) and plan appropriate treatment of residents who exhibit cold weather-related symptoms as indicated in the "Additional Tips & Information" section of this factsheet

Additional Tips & Information: First Aid for Cold-Induced Illnesses

Hypothermia:

Prolonged exposure to cold will eventually use up body's stored energy. The result is hypothermia, or abnormally low body temperature.

Warnings signs of hypothermia:

- Shivering
- Exhaustion
- Confusion
- Fumbling hands
- Memory loss
- Slurred speech
- Drowsiness

What to Do:

If you notice any of these signs, take the person's temperature. If it is below 95°, the situation is an emergency - get medical attention immediately.

Additional Resources:

⇒ National Weather Services, Extreme weather service warnings and alerts for California:

<http://alerts.weather.gov/cap/ca.php?x=1>

⇒ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Extreme cold prevention guide:

<http://emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/winter/>

⇒ CAHAN

www.bepreparedcalifornia.ca.gov/beinformed/naturaldisasters/pages/extremecold.aspx

We, at CAHF appreciate your thoughts and would like to ask for any disaster related suggestions or "Positive Practices" that you may have. Our goal is to use "Lessons Learned" and "Successful Applications" to help educate other facilities within our Long-Term Care Community.

Let's work as a T.E.A.M. - Together Everyone Achieves More!

What disaster or event would you like CAHF's Disaster Preparedness Program to use for a "Ready, Set, Go" Disaster Planning Topic? Contact us at (916) 441-6400.