



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

January 5, 2015

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**Protect Yourself, Loved Ones during Cold Weather**

**GRAND RAPIDS** – Temperatures will be in the single digits and teens in the coming days. The Kent County Health Department encourages residents to bundle up and be aware during the cold temperatures and wind chills. Be sure to keep an eye on your family, and check on your neighbors, especially those who are elderly. The cold can cause problems for many, especially young children, people with pre-existing medical conditions, and seniors.

If you are going outdoors, wear layers of light, warm clothing, mittens or gloves, hats, scarves, and waterproof boots. “Frostbite can happen in just a matter of minutes in these frigid temperatures,” says Adam London, Health Officer of the Kent County Health Department. “Redness, numbness or pain, white or grayish-yellow skin, or skin that feels unusually firm or waxy may be frostbitten. Have the affected person get into a warm room, and immerse the skin in warm (not hot) water.” Frostbite most often affects the extremities: nose, ears, cheeks, fingers, or toes. If the person appears to be very tired or lethargic, is having trouble breathing or talking, shivers or fumbles his or her hands, or seems confused, call 911 immediately. Try to keep the person warm until help arrives.

Respiratory issues can occur from breathing in cold air, such as asthma attacks. Be sure children with asthma are wearing a scarf, and if they appear to have trouble breathing, get them to a warm, sheltered area immediately. Exercising in extreme cold can cause breathing problems; consider keeping your workout indoors.

While indoors, take steps to protect your family from carbon monoxide. Never use grills, camp stoves, and generators inside of the house, the basement, and the garage. Follow the manufacturer’s instructions for any generators, grills, or stoves.

If driving in these conditions, make sure your car has more than enough gas to reach your destination. Keep a cell phone and phone charger in the car, and keep an emergency kit and blanket within your reach.

Keep pets indoors as much as possible. Make sure they are on a leash or in a fenced in area when they need to relieve themselves. The smaller the pet, the quicker the cold impacts them. Puppies and kittens are especially sensitive to the cold, as are older pets. Watch out for community cats that might crawl under the hood of your car to keep warm. Bang loudly on the hood before starting the car, and never leave pets in a car during the winter. Temperatures can be just as cold inside the car as they are outdoors.

If you have a non-emergency need due to the cold, call the United Way 211 line for assistance.

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KCHD has been in the business of providing health services to Kent County since 1931. The Health Department is home to nearly 260 employees including public health nurses, sanitarians, health educators, technicians, public health administrators, and specialized staff at the Kent County Animal Shelter. The Health Department operates one main clinic and three satellite clinics located in Kentwood, Rockford, and Grand Rapids. To learn more about KCHD services, visit [www.accesskent.com/health](http://www.accesskent.com/health).