

# Panhandle

Public Health District

## NEWS RELEASE

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For immediate release

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### **Cold Weather Safety: Prepare Now for the Coming Chill**

This communication is in coordination with Regions 21, 22, and 23 Emergency Management.

While today's weather may feel pleasant, colder temperatures are just around the corner. The US National Weather Service has posted that many spots across Western Nebraska may reach double digits below zero for three straight mornings. At these temps, winds of just 10 mph will make it feel closer to -30.

As we brace for cold temperatures over the weekend, we encourage everyone to take proactive steps to stay safe and healthy during cold weather conditions.

#### **Key Cold Weather Safety Tips:**

1. **Stay Warm and Layer Up:**
  - Wear several layers of loose-fitting clothing to trap body heat.
  - Don't forget hats, gloves, and scarves to protect extremities.
  - Avoid cotton as an outer layer, as it can retain moisture and make you colder.
2. **Prepare Your Home:**
  - Check that your heating system is working efficiently. Clean or replace filters as needed.
  - Seal windows and doors to prevent drafts and conserve heat.
  - Keep a supply of extra blankets and a battery-powered heater in case of power outages.
  - Ensure all space heaters are placed on a flat, stable surface and are at least three feet away from flammable materials.
  - Never leave space heaters unattended while in use.
  - If using a fireplace, ensure it is properly vented and free of obstructions.
  - Install and regularly test smoke and carbon monoxide detectors to ensure they are functioning.
3. **Stay Safe Outdoors:**
  - Limit time spent outside in extreme cold. Frostbite and hypothermia can occur quickly.

- If you must go out, be sure to dress warmly and take frequent breaks indoors to warm up.
  - Watch for signs of frostbite (pale or numb skin) and hypothermia (shivering, confusion, slurred speech).
4. **Drive Safely in Winter Conditions:**
- Check your tires, battery, and windshield wipers before cold weather arrives.
  - Keep an emergency kit in your vehicle, including blankets, water, snacks, and a flashlight.
  - Slow down and increase your following distance on icy or snowy roads.
5. **Look Out for Your Neighbors:**
- Check in on elderly or vulnerable neighbors to ensure they are warm and safe.
  - Offer to help with outdoor tasks, such as shoveling snow, if needed.
6. **Prepare for Emergencies:**
- Keep a supply of food, water, medications, and flashlights at home in case of severe weather or power outages.
  - Have a communication plan with family members to ensure everyone knows what to do during an emergency.

Preparation is key when it comes to winter safety. By taking these simple steps now, you can help protect yourself and your loved ones from the risks of extreme cold weather.

Panhandle Public Health District is working together to improve the health, safety and quality of life for all who live, learn, work and play in the Panhandle. Our vision is that we are a healthier and safer Panhandle Community.