



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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News Release

MEDIA POINT OF CONTACT

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Lavaca County OEM Offers Preparation Tips Before the Freeze

LAVACA COUNTY -- Temperatures are expected to plunge into the teens late weekend into early week, and when water is unintentionally added from a sprinkler system or the like, especially near a public road, and you have a recipe for a potentially dangerous situation.

"We're asking people to do is if they don't need them turn off their sprinkler system all together during this upcoming deep freeze event" said Lavaca County EMC, Egon Barthels.

Running your sprinkler in freezing conditions can cause more than just ice on your lawn and sidewalk. "It's not uncommon in places where these types of freezing conditions are more common to see frozen over-flow onto a street end up causing a vehicle accident." Barthels adds, "The sun could be out, but with sub-freezing temps, you could hit a patch of ice, and that's something we don't want to happen."

TxDOT and County Crews will be operating all weekend and during the Presidents Day Holiday to safety treat bridges and elevated areas, however, in this particular situation, icing is always a danger, over culverts for example.

Our first and best recommendation is to "stay-put" and "stay off of the road". Winter weather is impacting travel and this will also create a delayed response in emergency services getting to you in an event of icing of the roads and bridges.

Lavaca County Office of Emergency Management encourages you to please take some time to make precautions to protect life and property during chilly winter weather, including checking on the elderly, taking care of pets and livestock, and protecting plants and exposed plumbing.

Here are some tips to help you prepare:

Protect People

- * Keep warm, stay inside if possible.
- * Avoid overexertion, as cold weather puts added strain on your body.
- * Observe heater safety: never place a space heater on top of furniture or near water; keep heat sources at least three (3) feet away from furniture and drapes.
- * Never leave children unattended near a space heater.
- * Protect yourself from carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning by installing a battery-operated CO detector and never using generators, grills, camp stoves, or similar devices indoors.

Protect Pipes

- * Wrap exposed faucets and pipes, including those outside the house or in unheated crawl spaces, attics, garages and other areas. If you don't have the foam pipe coverings, a towel or rag and duct tape will do the trick.
- * Let your indoor faucets drip.
- * Open cabinets below sinks to allow the heat to circulate around the water pipes.
- * Insulate your outdoor water meter box and be sure its lid is on tight.
- * Cover any vents around your home's foundation.
- * Drain and store water hoses indoors.
- * Protect outdoor electrical pumps.
- * Drain swimming pool circulation systems or keep the pump motor running. (Run the pump motor only in a short freeze. Running the motor for long periods could damage it.)

- * Drain water sprinkler supply lines.
- * Make sure you know where your home's shut-off valve is and how to turn it on and off.
- * If you leave town, consider turning off your water at the shut-off valve while faucets are running to drain your pipes. Make sure you turn the faucets off before you turn the shut-off valve back on.
- * If you drain your pipes, contact your electric or gas utility company for instructions on protecting your water heater.

If Your Pipes Freeze

- * If a pipe bursts and floods your home, turn the water off at the shut-off valve (locate this before you have an emergency). Call a plumber for help if you can't find the broken pipe or if it's inaccessible. Don't turn the water back on until the pipe has been repaired.
- * If the pipe hasn't burst, thaw it out with an electric heating pad, hair dryer, portable space heater, or towel soaked with hot water. Apply heat by slowly moving the heat source toward the coldest spot on the pipe. Never concentrate heat in one spot because cracking ice can shatter a pipe. Turn the faucet on and let it run until the pipe is thawed and water pressure returns to normal.
- * Don't use a blowtorch or other open-flame device. They are fire risks and carbon monoxide exposure risks.

Protect Pets

Housing:

- * Provide proper shelter for your pet whether they live indoors or outdoors. Indoor pets should have their bed or crate placed in a safe and warm place that is away from drafts.
- * Outdoor pets should have a well-insulated house that is wind and waterproof resistant and elevated off the ground so wind and moisture can't seep inside. Install a door flap to protect against drafts and gusts of wind. Extra blankets and straw will also help to increase your pet's warmth.
- * Room and floor heaters should be kept away from your pet as they are an obvious fire hazard and can cause serious injuries as well.

Food & Water:

* Make sure to provide fresh, clean water for your pet every day. Outdoor pets need to consume 25 to 50 percent more calories than usual because the cold weather tends to deplete their energy. Make sure to talk to your veterinarian to make sure what is right for your pet.

Cars are Refrigerators:

* A car can act as refrigerator in the winter. Never leave your dog or cat alone in a car during the winter months as they will freeze to death.

Cats and Cars

* Keep your cats indoors during the winter. Not only can outdoor cats freeze, they sometimes sleep under the hoods of cars to stay warm. When the motor is started, the cat can be injured or killed by the fan belt. Give an outdoor cat a chance to escape by banging loudly on the car hood before starting your car.

Warmth:

* If you have a short-haired breed of dog, consider getting him / her a sweater with a high collar or turtleneck with coverage from the base of the tail to the belly to keep them warm.

* Never shave your dog down to the skin in the winter months as a longer coat will provide more warmth.

Antifreeze:

* Dogs and cats are attracted to the sweet smell and taste of antifreeze which contains ethylene glycol. A tiny lick can kill your dog or cat so make sure to check your car for leaks on your driveway or gutter.

* Keep containers tightly closed and clean up spills immediately.

* Check your local retailer for "pet safe" antifreeze.

Rodenticides:

* Rat and mouse poisons are commonly used during the winter months. Place them out of reach as they can cause fatal bleeding or kidney failure in your pet.

Protect Plants:

- * Bring potted plants inside or store in garage near interior wall to provide extra warmth and protection from wind.
- * For cold-sensitive outdoor plants, put down extra mulch and consider covering with a cloth fabric of some kind to shield the plants from wind and frost. Don't use plastic because when the sun comes out, it could "bake" your plants.
- * Water plants before freeze hits to keep them from going into stress.

Protect Your Car:

- * Take time to have your battery's charge and cold cranking amps checked Check your batteries for corrosion.
- * Never use wiper blades to clear ice or frost as this damages the blades. Use a scraper or can de-icer. Make sure all windows are clear for best visibility.
- * NEVER warm up your car in a closed garage, carbon monoxide poisoning is possible.
Common household items can be a quick fix to prevent damage
- * To wrap plants experts say look no further than the linen closet, but stick with cloth, a plastic tarp cause problems. You can also use non-LED Christmas lights. As long as they are not LED lights, they generate heat, just enough for most plants.
- * Another quick fix, water the plants well -- that will help insulate the roots.
- * To protect pipes start with an old towel or T-shirt and secure with duct tape, twine or rope.

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