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PEMA DIRECTOR URGES WINTER WEATHER PREPAREDNESS

HARRISBURG: Pennsylvania Emergency Management Director David M. Sanko today urged Pennsylvanians to move forward with winter storm preparedness, by readying their homes and vehicles for the possibility of major snow and ice storms or severe cold.

“With the threat of snow, ice and severe cold now upon us, Pennsylvanians should prepare homes and vehicles with winter storm kits to assist their families in the event of a weather emergency,” Sanko said.

“We all need to ensure that we’re prepared to travel safely to our destinations or to alter our travel plans as needed,” said Sanko. “We need to travel safe and smart. That means avoiding unnecessary travel, preparing our vehicles for winter driving, staying in touch with family and loved ones, and avoiding unnecessary risks.”

Traveling during winter storms should be avoided if possible. If traveling during winter storms, motorists are urged to remain at hotels or restaurants to allow snowplows to remove snow from highways.

PEMA recommends the following precautions as winter weather approaches:

- Store drinking water, first-aid kit, canned/no-cook food, non-electric can opener, radio, flashlight and extra batteries where you can get them easily, even in the dark.
- Know how the public is warned (radio, television, etc.) and the warning terms for each kind of broadcast weather alert in your community, for example:
 - “Winter storm watch” -- Be alert, a storm is likely;
 - “Winter storm warning” -- Take action, the storm is in or entering the area;

- “Blizzard warning” -- Snow and strong winds combined will produce blinding snow, near zero visibility, deep drifts, and life-threatening wind chill -- seek refuge immediately;
 - “Winter weather advisory” -- Winter weather conditions are expected to cause significant inconveniences and may be hazardous, especially to motorists;
 - “Frost/freeze warning” -- Below-freezing temperatures are expected and may cause damage to plants, crops or fruit trees;
 - “Flash flood or flood watch” -- Be alert to signs of flash flooding and be ready to evacuate on a moment’s notice;
 - “Flash flood warning” -- A flash flood is imminent -- act quickly to save yourself because you may have only seconds; and
 - “Flood warning” -- Flooding has been reported or is imminent -- take necessary precautions at once.
- Keep cars and other vehicles fueled and in good repair.
 - Winterize vehicles by checking your car battery, ignition system, thermostat, lights, flashers, exhaust, heater, brakes, defroster and tires.
 - Ensure your car has adequate antifreeze, windshield washer fluid and oil and check the levels regularly throughout the winter season.
 - Assemble a winter emergency kit for your car that includes a shovel, windshield scraper, flashlight, battery powered radio, extra batteries, water, snack food, extra hats and mittens, blanket, tow chain or rope, road salt and sand, booster cables, emergency flares, and a fluorescent distress flag.
 - If you must travel by car during a winter weather advisory or winter storm watch, do so in daylight, and don’t travel alone.
 - Avoid driving during a winter storm warning or blizzard warning.
 - Drive only at a speed that conditions permit; take your time; increase your safety distances between vehicles and brake carefully.
 - Keep others informed of your schedule and route, and stay on main roads; when and where possible, bring a cellular telephone for emergency communications.
 - Dress in several layers of loose-fitting, light-weight; warm clothing rather than one layer of heavy clothing. Outer garments should be tightly woven and water-repellent. Make sure you have a hat, mittens, a scarf, and sturdy, waterproof boots for each family member.

For additional winter and holiday safety information please visit the PA Emergency

Management Agency Web site at www.pema.state.pa.us.

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