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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**Freezing Temperatures in West Virginia Pose Serious Health Risks**  
*Hypothermia, frostbite, and carbon monoxide can be deadly*

**CHARLESTON, W.Va.** – The West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources is warning West Virginia residents about the dangers posed by freezing temperatures over the next few days. Serious health problems and even death can result from prolonged exposure to the cold including hypothermia and frostbite. Carbon monoxide poisoning and structure fires may occur when using unvented or unsafe heating practices.

"It's imperative that every resident across West Virginia plans ahead for the colder temperatures that will be affecting West Virginia this afternoon and tonight," said Dr. Letitia Tierney, State Health Officer and Commissioner for the Bureau for Public Health. "With the temperatures and wind-chill predicted for tonight and tomorrow, frostbite can occur in less than 30 minutes. Fingers, toes, earlobes and the tip of the nose are the most susceptible areas to frostbite."

Extremely cold temperatures can also cause hypothermia that occurs at any time the body's temperature drops below 95°F. Warning signs include uncontrollable shivering, memory loss, disorientation, incoherence and drowsiness. Tierney noted the temperature will be too cold for children to be playing outdoors and pets should be brought inside for tonight and tomorrow.

Carbon monoxide is another concern when heating with gas. Hundreds of Americans die each year as a result of carbon monoxide poisoning caused by malfunctioning or improperly used fuel burning appliances.

"Carbon monoxide (CO) is an odorless, colorless gas that, at high levels, can cause sudden illness and death within a few minutes," said Tierney. "If residents are using natural gas, kerosene, wood or propane to heat their homes, they need to ensure their homes are well-ventilated and are equipped with a carbon monoxide detector." Using a candle or Sterno (chaffing dish warmer) as a heating source is dangerous and should be avoided. Only use electric heaters in ways approved by the manufacturer and never operate them near curtains, blankets, or loose paper that could ignite. Do not use a gas oven to heat your home even for a short time. Do not sleep in any room with an unvented kerosene space heater.

Residents, who do not have a heating source in their home, need to contact the local Emergency Manager or the local health department to learn where the nearest shelter or warming station is located.

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