



# **Public Health Emergency Preparedness Informer**

Contact Susan McNabb, Volunteer Coordinator at 209-8068 or e-mail at [susanm@mail.hamiltontn.gov](mailto:susanm@mail.hamiltontn.gov) Winter 2008

## **Tips for Shelter Living During an Emergency**

Taking shelter during an emergency could mean that you have to be somewhere for several hours, days or maybe even weeks. Sheltering could be as simple as going into a basement during a tornado warning or staying home without electricity or water for several days during a major storm. With winter weather approaching and the probability of ice storms or snow, sheltering is a very real possibility. There are many ways to make sheltering a more pleasant experience for you and your family.

In many emergencies, the American Red Cross and other organizations set up public shelters in schools, city or county buildings and churches. While these shelters usually provide water, food, medicine, and basic sanitary facilities, you should plan to have your own supplies—especially water. Whether your shelter is at home or in a mass care facility, use the following tips while staying there during or after an emergency.

**Don't leave.** Stay in your shelter until local authorities say it's okay to leave. Realize that your stay in a shelter can range from a few hours to weeks in some cases.

**Behave.** Living with many people in a confined space can be difficult and unpleasant, even if the shelter is

at home. Remember that at a mass shelter you must cooperate with the shelter managers and others in the shelter.

**24-hour watch.** Take turns listening to radio updates and keep a 24-hour communications and safety watch going.

**Take it outside.** Restrict smoking to well-ventilated areas (or outside if it's safe) and make sure smoking materials are disposed of safely.

**Toilet.** Bathrooms may not be available so make sure you have a plan for human waste. A bucket with a tight fitting lid lined with garbage bags will make a useful portable toilet.

**Stick together.** Keep the family together as much as possible and include kids in discussions and decisions whenever possible.

**Explain.** Calmly tell your family what you know about the disaster using facts and words they can understand. Tell everyone what will happen next so they know what to expect. Let your kids and family know that they are safe. Repeat this as often as necessary to help them regain their confidence.

**Pets.** Public shelters may not allow pets (unless it is a service animal assisting a disabled person). Check into hotels in your area that are pet friendly. Remember to keep

on hand extra food and water for your pets.

**Valuables.** Protect your valuable items. Sometimes looting will occur in an evacuated area. If you shelter away from home, place valuables in a safe location.

Since disasters happen quickly and usually without warning, they can be very scary for both adults and children. A disaster may cause you to leave your home and your daily routine. It is important to realize that changes in your life due to a disaster will cause you to deal with many different emotions. This is expected and normal human behavior. There is a grieving process in some emergencies (fire, tornado, flood, etc.) and every person will handle that process differently. Talking to others helps relieve the stress and helps you realize that you are not alone. Children will look to adults during a disaster to see their reaction. How you deal with the situation will have an impact on them, so try to stay calm.

Sheltering in place or away from your home can be a stressful situation. Individuals affected by a disaster experience life changing challenges. **For more information about how to help someone in a stressful situation, visit [www.centerfordiastermedicine.org](http://www.centerfordiastermedicine.org) or [www.bt.cdc.gov/mentalhealth](http://www.bt.cdc.gov/mentalhealth).**

## **Preparing for a Winter Storm**

Cold snaps can be as challenging and deadly as any other natural disaster. Being prepared is the best defense to weathering a winter storm, and pre-season preparation and the right information can prevent loss of life or injury.

— Stock up on food, water, medicines and heating fuel.

— Secure back up heating sources such as kerosene heaters.

**(Never use charcoal, gas or propane heaters indoors.)**

— Buy bags of rock salt and sand for use on icy walkways.

— Weather strip doors and windows to help seal out the cold.

— Winterize your car. Check the wipers, battery, heater, defroster, ignition system, lights, oil and tire pressure.

During and after a winter storm, follow these suggestions:

— Conserve heating fuel by shutting off unused rooms.

— Wear several layers of clothing and a hat outdoors. Cover your mouth with a scarf to protect your lungs.

— Don't overexert yourself while

shoveling snow or chopping wood.

— Watch for signs of frostbite: loss of feeling along with paleness in tip of nose, fingers, toes and earlobes.

— Beware of hypothermia. Signs include uncontrollable shivering, slurred speech, drowsiness, memory loss and disorientation.

— Avoid driving at night or alone. Notify others of your schedule and route.

— Pack a winter emergency kit for your car with blankets, flashlight, water, snack foods, batter-powered radio, window scraper, tow chain or rope, shovel and flares.

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## CHCHD Public Health Emergency Preparedness Informer

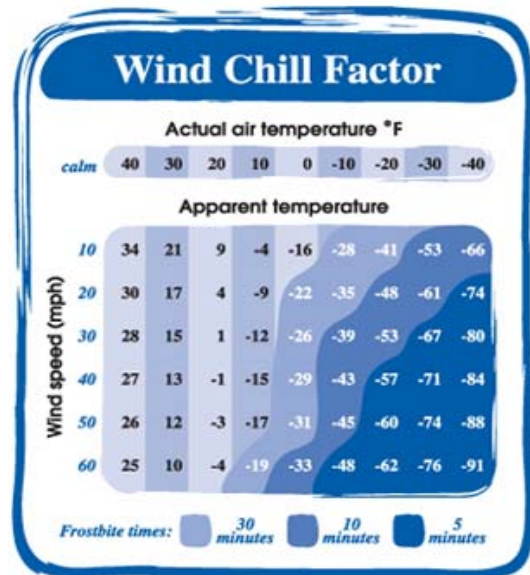
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### Understand Wind Chill

The wind chill temperature is how cold people and animals feel when outside. Wind chill is based on the rate of heat loss from exposed skin caused by wind and cold. As the wind increases, it draws heat from the body, driving down skin temperature and eventually the internal body temperature. Therefore, the wind makes it FEEL much colder. If the temperature is 0 degrees Fahrenheit and the wind is blowing at 20 mph, the wind chill is -22 degrees Fahrenheit. At this wind chill temperature, exposed skin can freeze in 30 minutes.

The Wind Chill Chart shows the difference between actual air temperature and perceived temperature, and amount of time until frostbite occurs.

For more information on winter weather, visit <http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/winter/faq.asp>



### TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

The Chattanooga-Hamilton County Health Department will host volunteer training sessions in the upcoming months on the topics listed below. As a part of the Medical Reserve Corps Program and part of the Surgeon General's Community Initiatives, we not only respond to a public health emergency, but we are also a part of the community education plan.

<u>DATE</u>	<u>TIME</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>TOPIC</u>	<u>PRESENTER</u>
January 17, 2008	12:00—1:00 (Lunch)	Health Department	Disaster Mental Health — How to Deal with Stress (This will be repeated in May as an evening session)	Angela Thurman Health Department Nurse Trainer
March 11, 2008	5:30—6:30	Health Department	Point of Dispensing Training and Medical Reserve Corps Orientation	Susan McNabb Volunteer Coordinator

Please RSVP (so we will have a head count for space and food) to Susan McNabb, 209-8068 or e-mail at [susanm@mail.hamiltontn.gov](mailto:susanm@mail.hamiltontn.gov).

#### Volunteer Information Update

If you have moved, changed telephone numbers, or are no longer interested in being a volunteer, please complete the form below and return to the address at the top of this page or e-mail Susan McNabb at [susanm@mail.hamiltontn.gov](mailto:susanm@mail.hamiltontn.gov).

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Cell \_\_\_\_\_ Work Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
 Home Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
 Work Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ I am unable to be a volunteer at this time. Please remove my name from the active volunteer list.