

Date: Monday December 8, 2008

Cold Weather Caution

Ottawa – As the temperature drops, the Medical Officer of Health and the Ottawa Paramedic Services would like to remind people to take precautions this winter. The City of Ottawa has a range of information and activities to help people have a safe and healthy winter.

Dress warmly

The first thing to take into consideration is dressing properly against the cold. At -15C, hypothermia becomes an increasing concern and overexposure to cold temperatures can result in severe injury and even death. The key to staying warm is to dress in layers and to make sure the outer layer protects you from wind and wetness. With a wind chill of -25, the risk of frostbite increases substantially so the City of Ottawa will be issuing a Frostbite Alert to local agencies that deal with those who are the most vulnerable to the cold. When the wind chill reaches -35, a Frostbite Warning will be issued to the media to advise people that exposed skin can freeze in minutes.

Check out the City of Ottawa website at

http://ottawa.ca/residents/health/environments/issues/cold/index_en.html for many more tips on dressing properly for cold weather and how to spot the symptoms of hypothermia and frostbite. Listen to local radio and television stations for the weather forecast so you can dress accordingly.

Watch out for falls

The risk of slipping and falling goes up as the temperature goes down so people should also be careful walking outside. Footwear with good traction is recommended and people should carry and use grit or non-clumping cat litter to sprinkle on icy patches. Seniors should take extra care since it is estimated that 1 in 3 seniors fall each year.

Help for the Homeless

The homeless are particularly vulnerable to cold weather so everyone should be vigilant if they see someone trying to live outdoors in extreme cold. There are services available to help the homeless including:

- Emergency sleeping spaces in Ottawa shelters
- Street outreach services to encourage homeless people to come in from the cold

- Provision of emergency transportation and other services by the Salvation Army

To seek assistance for a homeless person, concerned citizens are encouraged to call:

The Help for the Homeless Phone Line at 580-2626

Calls are answered by the City of Ottawa Call Centre on a priority basis and referrals are made to the appropriate services.

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For more information:

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Fall seven times, stand up eight

