

## Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

#### Potential Winter Storms Could Pose Problems... Are You Prepared?

**Coldwater, MI.** Winter officially starts on December 21st and with it comes snow... lots of snow. The National Weather Service is revising its forecast and is predicting a White Christmas for the Great Lakes. Are you prepared? The Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency recommends the following tips to help you plough through the winter months ahead:

#### 1) Ask your mechanic to check the following items on your car:

- **Antifreeze levels** - ensure they are sufficient to avoid freezing.
- **Battery and ignition system** - should be in top condition and battery terminals should be clean.
- **Brakes** - check for wear and fluid levels.
- **Exhaust system** - check for leaks and crimped pipes and repair or replace as necessary. Carbon monoxide is deadly and usually gives no warning.
- **Fuel and air filters** - replace and keep water out of the system by using additives and maintaining a full tank of gas. A full tank will keep the fuel line from freezing.
- **Heater and defroster** - ensure they work properly.
- **Lights and flashing hazard lights** - check for serviceability.
- **Oil** - check for level and weight. Heavier oils congeal more at low temperatures and do not lubricate as well.
- **Thermostat** - ensure it works properly.

- **Windshield wiper equipment** - repair any problems and maintain proper washer fluid levels.
- **Install good winter tires** - Make sure the tires have adequate tread. All-weather radials are usually adequate for most winter conditions. However, some jurisdictions require that to drive on their roads, vehicles must be equipped with chains or snow tires with studs.

**2) When traveling long distances, make sure you have an emergency travel kit that includes the following items:**

- Shovel
- Windshield Scraper
- Small Broom
- Flashlight
- Battery Powered Radio
- Extra Batteries
- Water
- Snack Food
- Extra hats, socks, Mittens
- Matches
- First Aid Kit
- Pocket Knife
- Needed Medications
- Blankets
- Tow Chain or Rope
- Booster Cables
- Road Salt and Sand
- Emergency Flares
- Fluorescent Distress Flag

**3) Make Sure to Winterize Your Home**

- Insulate walls and attics. Caulk and weather strip windows and doors. Install storm windows or cover windows with plastic.
- Clear rain gutters; repair roof leaks and cut away tree branches that could fall on a house or other structure during a storm.
- Maintain heating equipment and chimneys by having them cleaned and inspected every year.
- Insulate pipes with insulation or newspapers and plastic and allow faucets to drip a little during cold weather to avoid freezing. Learn how to shut off water valves (in case a pipe bursts).
- Keep fire extinguishers on hand, and make sure everyone in your house knows how to use them.
- Hire a contractor to check the structural ability of the roof to sustain unusually heavy weight from the accumulation of snow - or water, if drains on flat roofs do not work.

#### **4) Protect yourself from Fire and Carbon Monoxide Poisoning**

- Never use a generator, grill, camp stove or other gasoline, propane, natural gas or charcoal-burning devices inside a home, garage, basement, crawlspace or any partially enclosed area. Locate unit away from doors, windows and vents that could allow carbon monoxide to come indoors.
- Install smoke and carbon monoxide alarms on every floor of your home. Also, in every bedroom and in the hallway outside of each sleeping area. Check them regularly to make sure they work.
- Have a plan on what to do and talk about it with your family if one of these detection alarms goes off.

Don't let Old, Man Winter catch you unprepared. Follow these tips to be safe as you enjoy Michigan's Winter Wonderland! To learn more about winter safety, visit our website at [www.bhsj.org](http://www.bhsj.org).

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