

Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Stormy Weather is in the Air

Coldwater, MI. The 2015 Spring Season has brought with it storms and high winds with the potential for downed wires and power outages. The Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency wants you to be prepared in the event of a severe storm and offers the following strategies to keep you safe:

Tornado: In case of a tornado warning, if you are advised to take cover, you should:

- **Move to an interior room within a basement.** If there is no basement, go to an inside room, without windows, on the lowest floor. This could be a center hallway, bathroom, or closet.
- **Get under something sturdy such as a heavy table or workbench.** If possible, cover your body with a blanket, sleeping bag, or mattress, and protect your head with anything available--even your hands.
- **Get out and move to a nearby building, preferably one with a basement if you are in a mobile home or a moving vehicle when you hear the warning.** If there is no shelter nearby, move to the nearest ditch, ravine, or culvert – avoiding areas with trees and vehicles - and lie down. Shield your head with your hands. Do not get under your car or your mobile home, as they cannot withstand tornado winds and may roll over you.

Downed Wires: *If a power line falls on a car, you should:*

- **Stay inside the vehicle.** This is the safest place to stay. Warn people not to touch the car or the line. Call or ask someone to call the local utility company and emergency services.

- **If the vehicle catches on fire, open the door and jump free of the car so that your body clears the vehicle before touching the ground.** Do not step out of the car. You may receive a shock. Once you clear the car, shuffle at least 50 feet away, with both feet on the ground.
- As in all power line related emergencies, call for help immediately by dialing 911 and call your electric utility company's Service Center/Dispatch Office.
- If you come across someone who you believe has been electrocuted, take the following steps:
 - **Look first. Don't touch.** The person may still be in contact with the electrical source. Touching the person may pass the current through you.
 - **Call or have someone else call 911 for emergency medical help.**
 - **Turn off the source of electricity if possible.** If not, move the source away from you and the affected person using a non-conducting object made of cardboard, plastic or wood.
 - **Once the person is free of the source of electricity, check the person's breathing and pulse.** If either has stopped or seems dangerously slow or shallow, begin CPR immediately.
 - **If the person is faint or pale or shows other signs of shock, lay the person down with the head slightly lower than the trunk of his or her body and the legs elevated.**
 - **Don't touch burns, break blisters, or remove burned clothing.**

Power Outage: If your power is out for less than 2 hours, then the food in your refrigerator and freezer will be safe to consume. While the power is out, keep the refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible to keep food cold for longer. If the power is out for longer than 2 hours, follow the guidelines below:

- **For the Freezer section:** A freezer that is half full will hold food safely for up to 24 hours. A full freezer will hold food safely for 48 hours. Do not open the freezer door if you can avoid it.
- **For the Refrigerated section:** Pack milk, other dairy products, meat, fish, eggs, and spoilable leftovers into a cooler surrounded by ice. Inexpensive Styrofoam coolers are fine for this purpose.

When power goes out, your private water supply may not operate properly. Safe water for drinking, cooking, and personal hygiene includes bottled, boiled, or chemically treated water. Remember:

- **Do not use contaminated water to wash dishes, brush your teeth, wash and prepare food, wash your hands, make ice, or make baby formula.** If possible, use baby formula that does not need to have water added. You can use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer to wash your hands.
- **If you use bottled water, be sure it came from a safe source.** If you do not know that the water came from a safe source, you should boil or treat it before you use it. Use only bottled, boiled, or treated water until your supply is tested and found safe.
- **Boiling water, when practical, is the preferred way to kill harmful bacteria and parasites.** Bringing water to a rolling boil for 1 minute will kill most organisms. According to Jim Cook, “remembering the saying ‘when you boil until you see big bubbles, then you have no troubles’ is a good reminder.”

According to Steve Todd, Health Officer, “Branch and Hillsdale Counties can be sure to receive severe weather alerts by signing up for ‘**Code Red**’”. **‘Code Red’ Weather Warning** is a free, service that automatically notifies those in the path of severe weather just moments after a warning has been issued by the National Weather Service. Notification occurs either through an automated phone message or text. Sign up is easy and can be accessed by typing cne.coderedweb.com into your browser.

The Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency offers additional tips on how to be healthy and safe at www.bhsj.org. Check under the heading ‘Quick Info About Health Topics’ for a list of printable handouts to assist you in staying healthy and safe.

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