FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Get Ready, Ohio! Winter Safety Awareness Week is November 17-23

Columbus, OH – A cold front this week, combined with Winter Safety Awareness Week, which starts Sunday, serves as a reminder for all Ohioans to take steps to be better prepared for winter before it’s too late.

In a coordinated effort, Governor Mike DeWine and the Ohio Committee for Severe Weather Awareness (OCSWA) recognize November 17-23 as Winter Safety Awareness Week.

“Winter Safety Awareness Week is a good time to restock our emergency supply kits and prepare our homes and vehicles for the upcoming winter months,” said Gov. DeWine. “It’s also a good time to update safety plans, practice those plans – such as home fire drills – and to prepare for winter-related incidents.”

According to the annual National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Winter Outlook, warmer-than-average temperatures are forecast for much of the United States this winter. No part of the country is favored to have below-average temperatures this winter. Neither El Niño nor La Niña will have an influence on winter, which extends from December through February.

No matter the forecast, the Ohio Committee for Severe Weather Awareness (OCSWA) encourages Ohioans to plan and prepare for the winter season and its hazards.

“Ohio winters are more than frigid temperatures, snow and ice,” said Ohio EMA Executive Director Sima Merick. “An EF1 tornado touched down in Trumbull County on January 8; and Clark County had an EF0 tornado on February 7. Also, most of Ohio was inundated with heavy rains, severe storms and landslides, which resulted in a total of 21 southern Ohio counties receiving a federal disaster declaration, very similar to February of 2018. So, during this week, check your homeowners or renters insurance. Consider purchasing flood insurance. Know what to do if the power goes out. Prepare now, before winter sets in.”

OCSWA recommends the following winter preparedness tips:

Practice fire safety and prevention. With winter months and the holiday season, people are indoors more, and cook, decorate and entertain more – which unfortunately, can lead to more home fires. The best protection is to have working smoke detectors in the home. Test your smoke detectors monthly. Conduct fire drills. Change the batteries in your smoke and carbon monoxide detectors twice a year – when you change your clocks, change your batteries. Have auxiliary heaters, furnaces and fireplaces checked or serviced before using. Cooking-related fires are the number one cause of home fires. Never leave cooking food unattended. Keep towels, potholders, and paper products away from the stove’s heat sources.
Prepare your home for winter. Remove and cut away low-hanging and dead tree branches. Strong winds, ice and snow can cause tree limbs to break and could cause damage to your home. Have your gutters cleaned. Snow and ice can build up quickly if clogged with debris.

Prepare winter emergency supplies kits for the home and vehicle. Check the expiration dates on nonperishable food items, bottled water/beverages and medications. Winter emergency kits should include flashlights, extra batteries, blankets, coats, hats, gloves, a battery-operated radio/weather radio, first aid kit, cell phone and charger, and enough nonperishable food and water (one gallon per person, per day) to sustain every household member for several days. Store food, bottled water and supplies for your pets, as well.

Check on your neighbors. After severe weather or during prolonged power outages, check on your neighbors and family members – particularly those who are older or have functional needs – to ensure that they are safe, healthy, and warm. Your emergency or communications plan might include ensuring your neighbors have emergency supplies, and exchanging phone numbers to call or text during times of need.

Neighbors Helping Neighbors. This concept empowers community leaders to involve the people in their communities and teach them they can take to become more prepared, and more resilient, if a severe weather incident were to occur. Approximately 46% of individuals rely a great deal on their neighbors for assistance during the first 72 hours after a disaster.

2019-2020 Severe Weather Awareness Poster Contest
Also, as part of Winter Safety Awareness Week, OCSWA announces that Ohio students in grades 1-6, including individualized instruction classes, can draw and enter posters in its annual Severe Weather Awareness Poster Contest. Students have from now until mid-April to work on their posters that illustrate how people can protect themselves and others from the dangers and hazards that accompany severe weather in Ohio. Click here for entry rules and information.

The Ohio Committee for Severe Weather Awareness is comprised of 16 local, state, and federal agencies and organizations. For additional information on winter weather safety and severe weather preparedness, visit OCSWA’s website: www.weathersafety.ohio.gov.

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