

January 2014

**Winter weather can include a variety of conditions including ice, snow, wind and severe cold. In order to be ready for winter weather, it is critical to prepare in advance. The health and safety of direct support professionals and the individuals we serve depends on each agency and program being prepared for winter weather and the hazards it can bring.**

**Weather Forecast:**

If a storm is coming or very cold temperatures are predicted, stay inside when possible. Be aware of the wind chill factor which can decrease temperatures dramatically. Other considerations:

- Walk carefully: Sidewalks and driveways may be icy.
- Wear appropriate outdoor clothing: layers of light warm clothing, mittens, hats, scarves, and waterproof boots. Ensure that people we support have adequate winter clothing and footwear.
- Keep dry: Wet clothing will cause you to lose body heat quickly.

**Prevention of Cold Injuries:**

Ensure direct support professionals and individuals are aware of the signs of frostbite. These include loss of feeling and white or pale appearance in extremities. For individuals with limited mobility or decreased circulation, frostbite is a real hazard. If you observe signs of frostbite, get medical help immediately.

Direct support professionals and individuals should also know about the signs and symptoms of hypothermia. They include uncontrollable shivering, memory loss, disorientation, incoherence, slurred speech, drowsiness and apparent exhaustion. If hypothermia is suspected:

- Get the person out of the cold immediately
- Remove wet clothing
- Use dry clothing and blankets to warm the person
- Warm the center of the body first
- Get medical help as soon as possible
- Give warm, non-alcoholic beverages if possible

**Emergency Supplies:**

Stock the following supplies in the event a winter storm or power outage prevents you from leaving your home:

- Flashlights/Battery operated lanterns
- Battery-operated or hand crank radio
- Extra batteries
- A supply of non-perishable foods
- Non-electric can opener
- Bottled water
- One week supply of medicines
- Extra blankets or sleeping bags
- First aid kit and manual
- Fire extinguisher

**Travel:**

Avoid traveling alone when possible. Carry a fully charged cell phone so you can call for help if needed. Keep a flashlight, extra blanket and snow brush in the vehicle during cold weather.

**Additional resources on winter weather and preparedness are available from NYALERT at: <http://www.nyalert.gov/> the NYS Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services at: <http://www.dhSES.ny.gov/oem/safety-info/publicsafety/winter.cfm> or FEMA: <http://www.ready.gov/winter-weather>**