



**American
Red Cross**

Serving Muskegon, Oceana and Newaygo Counties

313 West Webster Avenue
Muskegon, Michigan 49440
Phone (231) 726-3555
Fax (231) 722-4126
www.arcmon.org

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Use

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Contact: Tim Lipan, 231-720-4222

Red Cross Offers Tips on How to Stay Warm During Frigid Temperatures

Bone chilling temperatures have gripped much of the country, and the [American Red Cross](http://www.americanredcross.org) urges everyone to be safe and prepare as much as possible.

We want to people to be safe, prepared and take precautions to protect life and property during these winter months.

Many are looking to cut down on expenses when temperatures drop and home-heating costs rise. "There is usually an increase in home fires at this time of year because of the use of candles and space heaters," said Tim Lipan, Executive Director, American Red Cross "We have steps people can follow to reduce their risk of starting a fire in their home, and still cut down on their heating bills."

HEAT YOUR HOME SAFELY

- All heaters need space! Keep things that can burn, such as paper, bedding or furniture, at least 3 feet away from heating equipment, fireplaces and stoves.
- Place portable space heaters on a hard, level, nonflammable surface. Do not put space heaters on rugs or carpets, near bedding or drapes, and keep children and pets away.
- Look for a model that shuts off automatically if the space heater tips over. Do not use heating equipment to dry wet clothing.
- Never use the stove or oven to heat your home.
- Never leave portable heaters, wood burning stoves or fireplaces unattended. Turn them off before leaving or going to bed
- Keep the fire in the fireplace by using a glass or metal screen large enough to catch sparks and rolling logs.
- Running water, even a trickle helps prevent pipes from freezing.

CUT DOWN ON YOUR HEATING BILLS

- Eliminate drafts. Use either insulating tape or caulking strips to surround windows and door moldings. Cover your windows with plastic sheeting. If you have storm windows or storm doors, get them up to keep the cold out.
- Make sure heat vents aren't blocked by furniture.
- Turn down the thermostat.
- Close off any rooms that aren't in use and close heat vents or turn off radiators in those rooms.
- Insulate your light switch and outlet plates with foam pads. Cold air can seep into the house through them.
- Use heavy curtains to keep cold air out. Open them during the day to let the sun help warm your home and close them at night. Use fabric snakes or old carpets in front of windows and doors to help eliminate drafts.
- Turn off vent fans in the kitchen and bathroom when they are no longer needed.
- Set ceiling fans to blow air down.

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

- Dress in several layers of lightweight clothing. Avoid overdressing or overexertion that can lead to heat illness.
- Most of your body heat is lost through your head so wear a hat preferably one that covers your ears. Don't forget gloves or mittens.
- Wear waterproof, insulated boots to help avoid hypothermia or frostbite by keeping feet warm and dry and to maintain your footing in ice and snow.
- Get out of wet clothes immediately and warm up with a blanket or warm fluids. Avoid drinking caffeine or alcohol if you think you have hypothermia or frostbite.
- Recognize the symptoms of hypothermia: confusion, dizziness, exhaustion and severe shivering. Seek medical attention immediately if you have these symptoms.

- Recognize frostbite warning signs: gray, white or yellow skin discoloration, numbness, waxy feeling skin. Seek medical attention immediately if you have these symptoms.
- Allow extra time for traveling. Monitor weather conditions and follow travel advisories.
- Keep a winter storm survival kit in your car. It should include blankets, food, flares, gloves and first aid supplies.

DON'T FORGET FIDO AND YOUR NEIGHBOR

Don't forget pets – bring them indoors. If that's not possible, provide adequate shelter to keep them warm and make sure they can get to unfrozen water.

Check on people who require special assistance such as elderly people living alone, people with disabilities and children.

About the American Red Cross:

The American Red Cross shelters, feeds and provides emotional support to victims of disasters; supplies nearly half of the nation's blood; teaches lifesaving skills; provides international humanitarian aid; and supports military members and their families. The Red Cross is a charitable organization — not a government agency — and depends on volunteers and the generosity of the American public to perform its mission. For more information, please call 231-726-3555 or visit www.redcross.org.