

# NEWS RELEASE

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## Cold weather dangers

Richland, Wash.— The Lower Columbia Basin will continue to see temperatures well-below normal along with additional snow accumulations over the weekend. Benton County Emergency Services reminds residents to take extra precautions to protect their health and safety if venturing outside.

Parents need to ensure children going outside for activities in the snow are dressed properly. With the extremely low temperatures, there is a very real potential for hypothermia and/or frostbite, both of which can be very dangerous. Either can occur fairly quickly if time outdoors is excessive or proper protective clothing is not worn. Children are particularly susceptible because they lose heat from their skin more rapidly than adults do and are often less conscientious about taking self-protective measures.

Seniors are also more susceptible because normal aspects of aging include the reduction of fat layers under the skin and an altered ability to regulate body temperature. Circulation may already be impaired in seniors, or in others, due to health conditions.

Outdoor workers and joggers are exposed for long periods to cold and the elements, and they may run the risk of becoming perspired, which results in damp clothing against your skin. The risk of frostbite and hypothermia increase with moist clothing because it tends to draw the heat away from the body.

Pets also run the risk of hypothermia and frostbite, and care needs to be taken to protect them, as well.

The best way to prevent hypothermia and frostbite is to keep your body, your extremities, your ears and your nose warm. Wear layers of loose clothing using an outer layer to break the wind, a middle layer such as wool or a synthetic for warmth, and an **(continued on next page)**

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inner absorbent layer such as cotton, which will help to keep you dry. Wear a hat when outdoors to prevent heat loss through the top of your head, and actively protect your ears, fingers and toes, as they are prone to frostbite. Gloves or mittens, and warm socks with shoes or boots that allow for wiggle room are a must. Wrapping a warm scarf around your neck, nose and mouth helps to warm the air you are breathing in.

If clothing becomes wet, change into something dry. Take active measures to protect yourself and your loved ones.

For additional tips on coping with the winter weather and additional information on hypothermia or frostbite, please visit the BCES web site at [www.bces.wa.gov](http://www.bces.wa.gov). ***If you suspect someone is suffering from hypothermia or frostbite, seek immediate medical assistance.***

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