Dear Allegheny County resident,

As the winter weather quickly approaches it is essential to prepare a safety plan before it is needed. The best recommendation is to evaluate situations that may need attention to prevent a possible problem. A few things to consider are a food supply, medical supply, safety care kit, emergency contact planning, and being able to stay warm and healthy until you can get to the proper care you need. Please consider the ideas below to allow you to prepare for the upcoming winter season.

Winter Weather Preparedness Tips:
Be prepared for any rough weather that could come your way. To stay safe in the harsh storms of winter it is very important to plan and prepare ahead of time to prevent problems.

BEFORE the Storm…

- *Winterize your home*
  - Insulate walls
  - Caulk and weather strip doors and windows
  - Install storm windows or cover windows with plastic from the inside
- *Have safe emergency heating equipment available*
  - Portable space heater, kerosene heater or fire wood
- *Install and check smoke detectors*
- *Keep pipes from freezing*
  - Wrap pipes with bags of newspaper
  - Let all water drip out of the pipes
- *Have disaster supplies on hand, in case the power goes out*
  - Prepare a **72-hour Family Preparedness Kit**
  - Include: Flashlight, extra batteries, first-aid kit, supply of shelf-stable food, manual can opener, supply of emergency prescription medication, extra blankets and sleeping bags
- *Develop an emergency communication plan*
  - Contact a friend or out-of-area relative to alert him/her to your situation and how quickly you will need care in the event you cannot get out. Create a plan for those whom to contact to assist you.
- *Prepare food and food handling devices*
  - Store canned items that are easy to open (fruit, vegetables, soups)
  - Crackers, peanut butter and other foods that store well
  - If your cans do not open with a tab be sure to have a can open

DURING the Storm...

- *Stay indoors and dress warmly*
  - Wear loose-fitting, layered, light-weight clothing
  - Layers can be removed to prevent perspiration and chill
- *Conserve fuel*
  - Lower thermostat to 65 degrees during the day and 55 degrees at night

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Stay tuned in to precautionary advice on local television and radio stations:

"WIND CHILL"

- Is the calculation of how cold it feels outside when the effects of temperature and wind speed are combined. A strong wind combined with a temperature of just below freezing can have the same effect as a still air temperature about **35** degrees colder.

"WINTER storm WATCH"

- Indicates that severe winter weather may affect your area

"WINTER storm WARNING"

- Indicates that severe weather conditions are definitely on the way

"Blizzard Warning"

- Large amounts of falling or blowing snow sustained winds of at least 35 miles per hour are expected for several hours.

Nutrition is a major part of keeping our bodies healthy enough to function.
How can you get your "sunshine vitamin" when you can't be in the sunshine?

Vitamin D is an essential vitamin that we can obtain from sun light, and therefore is often referred to as the 'sunshine vitamin.' Vitamin D aids in the absorption of calcium, which is extremely important for strong and healthy bones. As the winter weather keeps us indoors for longer periods of time we may not be able to obtain the needed amount of vitamin D through sunshine. A good way to ensure that our bodies are getting enough vitamin D is to consume foods that are high in vitamin D or fortified with vitamin D.

Foods with high levels of vitamin D:

- Fish oil, cod liver oil
- Fish such as catfish, herring, salmon, halibut
- Milk and milk products that have been fortified to add vitamin D
- Soy products
- Enriched ready-to-eat cereals

Before harsh winter weather strikes, stock up on these foods and other healthful foods that have been fortified with vitamin D. Be sure to think of all the essential vitamins and minerals that are important in a healthy diet. Consuming an array of a fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, and milk will help your body stay strong and healthy.

One of the most important things to remember throughout the winter weather is that your safety is most important. Remember, if you lose power there may be warming centers in your community that will provide temporary shelter. Always ask for help if you need it.

Allegheny County
Department of Human Services
Area Agency on Aging
Senior Line: 412-350-5460