

NEWS RELEASE: Jan. 31, 2011

Prepare now for severe winter weather

The Springfield-Greene County Office of Emergency Management advises residents to heed the Blizzard Warning issued by the National Weather Service and prepare now for severe winter weather.

Tonight's forecast calls for freezing rain and sleet, with wind gusts up to 30 mph. Precipitation turns into heavy snow Tuesday, with 20-30 mph winds and gusts up to 40.

"We're expecting a lot of snow, but our primary concern right now is ice and high winds, which is a recipe for power outages," said Ryan Nicholls, Director of the Springfield-Greene County Office of Emergency Management. "Typically, power lines can withstand a half inch of ice, but if the wind starts to blow down tree limbs, those could knock down powerlines. We don't know if anyone will lose power, but we want everyone to be ready."

Loss of electricity

Nicholls advises residents to fill up gas tanks, locate radios, flashlights and extra batteries, charge up cell phones and make sure you have enough food, drinking water and medications at home to last a few days. Residents who rely on a well water pump should store extra water, in case you lose power.

"If you lose power, be sure to tune into your local radio station for road conditions, shelters locations and other information," said Nicholls.

If you lose power, report it to your utility company. **Do not call 911** to report power outages, unless you need police, fire or emergency assistance. Do not rely on candles, gas ovens or camp stoves to heat your home.

Roads

Temperatures will dip into the single digits Tuesday night, and are not expected to reach the mid-20s until Friday. While road crews will be plowing and salting roads, transportation officials warn motorists that salt is not as effective at low temperatures, and some roads may remain icy until later this week. City and county road crews will initially focus on clearing major roadways before plowing minor routes.

"With weather this nasty, it's best for people to avoid unnecessary travel and shelter at home," said Nicholls.

Residents are advised to park in driveways when possible, rather than on the street, as it is difficult to plow around parked vehicles.

If you must drive, carry a shovel, sand or cat box filler for traction, and blankets, snacks, water, to sustain you if you become stranded.

(continued)

Shelters

In the event of widespread power outages, the Office of Emergency Management will open warming centers and overnight shelters. Locations will be announced as shelters open. City Utilities of Springfield will provide transportation to shelters in Springfield, free of charge, on city buses.

Information

Emergency Management will provide updates, as needed, through local media as well as these online resources:

www.greenecountymo.org

www.springfieldmo.gov

www.facebook.com/greenecountymo and www.facebook.com/cityofspringfieldmo

www.twitter.com/gcoem and www.twitter.com/cityofsgf

www.nixle.com

Residents may also call the Disaster Hotline, between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. at 417-829-6200.

For media inquiries, call Ryan Nicholls, Director of the Springfield-Greene County Office of Emergency Management, at 417-869-6040; or Jenny Fillmer Edwards, Greene County Public Information Officer, at 417-89-6019 or 417-224-5510; or Mike Brothers, City of Springfield Department of Public Information, at 417-864-1119, or 417-894-9064.

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