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STATE POLICE**

A PROUD tradition of SERVICE through EXCELLENCE, INTEGRITY, and COURTESY

NEWS RELEASE: State Fire Marshal Urges Home Heating Safety as Bitter Temps Grip Michigan

01/30/2019



NEWS RELEASE

STATE EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

News Release No. 2 – January 30, 2019

State Fire Marshal Urges Home Heating Safety as Bitter Temps Grip Michigan

LANSING, MICH. With the winter of 2019 wearing on with increasingly frigid temperatures, State Fire Marshal Kevin Sehlmeier today urges fire safety for all Michiganders, especially the elderly who are most at risk when it comes to fire.

“It is so important to talk about fire safety with our parents, grandparents, friends or neighbors. Last year 63 percent of the 136 fire fatalities in Michigan involved adults over the age of 40,” said Sehlmeier. “Start with making sure they have working smoke alarms and a carbon monoxide detector. Go over fire safety practices and develop a fire escape plan with them. These are things that will prevent or increase your ability to escape and survive a fire.”

Of the 104 fatal fires in Michigan in 2018, 60 percent of the fires started in a bedroom or living room. Many of the fatal fires in 2018 involved space heaters, wood stoves, fireplaces and overloaded electric wiring. Due to the rise in fire deaths in 2018 and the fact that last January was one of the deadliest months for fatal fires, the fire marshal requests that Michiganders think about ways to prevent fires and implement control methods in their home.

Sehlmeier said that non-working or missing smoke alarms was a common reason many people did not receive early warning or delayed their escape efforts during 104 fatal residential fires in Michigan in 2018.

Having working smoke alarms may reduce the risk of dying in a fire by as much as 60 percent. "Install smoke alarms in every occupied sleeping area and on every level of the home. Many new smoke alarms have the ability to interconnect smoke alarms, so when one sounds all smoke alarms sound," said Sehlmeier. "Test every smoke alarm monthly and change batteries annually if your smoke alarm operates with a 9-volt battery. For the deaf or hard of hearing, consider installing smoke alarms that use a flashing light or a bed shaker device to alert them of a fire emergency."

According to the U.S. Fire Administration, adults over age 65 are more than twice as likely to die in fires. Seniors over age 85 are more than four times as likely to die in a fire. Older adults are at higher risk because their ability to respond to or escape a fire is often slower due to physical limitations.

Many precautions can be taken to help increase your ability to survive or prevent a fire this winter, including:

Home safety tips:

- Clear snow away from all exterior doors so you can get out fast in the event of an emergency.
- Whether living in a single-family dwelling, apartment, or mobile home, make sure it has multiple smoke alarms. This includes smoke alarms in each sleeping area and one on each level of your home.
- Interconnect smoke alarms when possible, so when one alarm sounds, all the smoke alarms sound
- Make sure every smoke alarm is tested monthly.
- Replace 9-volt batteries in smoke alarms at least once per year.
- Never remove or disable smoke alarms.
- Close bedroom doors when you sleep to separate yourself from fire, heat and toxic smoke.
- Make sure kids and the elderly in your home know the sound of the smoke alarm.
- Have a home fire escape plan that the entire family has practiced that includes having two ways out of every room as well as a meeting place outside the house. Also make sure that you can open and get out of windows and doors.
- Call 9-1-1 AFTER you exit your home, if your smoke alarm(s) or carbon monoxide (CO) alarm(s) are sounding.
- Install carbon monoxide (CO) alarms in your home to alert you of high levels of CO.
- Never use the range or oven as a source to heat for your home. The oven not only is a potential fire hazard, it can become a source of high levels of carbon monoxide.

Space Heater Safety:

- Space heaters need to be plugged directly into an electrical outlet
- Never use an extension cord with a space heater.
- If you buy a space heater, make sure it has an automatic shut-off switch.
- Never use an electric space heater in a bathroom or other areas where it may come in contact with water.
- Keep kids and pets three feet away from space heaters and turn them off when leaving a room or going to bed.
- Keep furniture, blankets and other household objects at least three feet away from a space heater.

Methods of Heating Safety:

- Carefully follow the manufacturer's instructions or have a professional install wood burning stoves. All fuel-burning equipment must be vented to the outside to avoid a build-up of carbon monoxide (CO) inside the home.

- If you smell natural gas or propane near your furnace or your gas heater, do not try to light the appliance. Leave the home immediately, call 9-1-1 and request the fire department and/or gas company respond to your home.
- If using a space heater that requires kerosene or propane, always use the correct fuel specified by the manufacturer and take the heater outside of the home to re-fuel or change tanks.
- Make sure the fireplace and wood stove have a sturdy screen to stop sparks and embers from flying into the room.
- Keep home furnishings, blankets and other objects at least three feet away from fireplaces, and wood burning stoves.

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MEDIA CONTACT:

Jeannie Vogel, Dept. of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs, 517-335-5272 or VogelJ1@michigan.gov

- [News Release State Fire Marshal Urges Home Heating Safety.pdf](#)

UPDATED NEWS RELEASE: State Fire Marshal Urges Home Heating Safety as Bitter Temps Grip Michigan

01/30/2019



NEWS RELEASE
STATE EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER

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News Release No. 2 – January 30, 2019

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MEDIA CONTACT:

Jeannie Vogel, Dept. of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs, 517-335-5272 or VogelJ1@michigan.gov

- [News Release State Fire Marshal Urges Home Heating Safety.pdf](#)

NEWS RELEASE: Subject: State Offices Will Remain Closed on Thursday, Jan. 31, 2019

01/30/2019



NEWS RELEASE

STATE EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

News Release No. 3 – January 30, 2019

Subject: State Offices Will Remain Closed on Thursday, Jan. 31, 2019

LANSING, MICH. With the continuation of the historic emergency weather conditions impacting the state of Michigan, all state government offices will remain closed through Thursday, Jan. 31, 2019, until 10 p.m. Specified essential services will remain operational during the emergency.

“The National Weather Service continues to predict dangerously cold sub-zero temperatures and the priority must continue to be on keeping people safe,” said Gov. Gretchen Whitmer. “While keeping people safe, essential staff at state agencies will continue to make sure important government work gets done though office buildings are closed. Again, for your safety and the safety of our first responders, I urge all Michiganders not to take any unnecessary risks during this extreme weather.”

State employees that are deemed nonessential should not report to work on Thursday, Jan. 31, 2019. Any employee with questions about whether their work functions are deemed essential should contact their supervisor. All state employees with shifts that begin on or after 10:00 p.m., on Thursday, Jan. 31, 2019, should report to work during their normal hours on Friday, Feb. 1.

The State Emergency Operations Center will remain open to monitor weather conditions.

Employees and residents should check www.michigan.gov for updates.

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MEDIA CONTACT:

Caleb Buhs, Dept. of Technology, Management and Budget, 517-303-4038 or BuhsC@michigan.gov

- [News Release Subject State Offices Will Remain Closed on Thursday.pdf](#)

NEWS RELEASE: Utility Shutoffs Suspended during this Week's Bitterly Cold Weather

01/30/2019



NEWS RELEASE

STATE EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

News Release No. 4 – January 30, 2019

Utility Shutoffs Suspended during this Week's Bitterly Cold Weather

LANSING, MICH. Due to frigid temperatures across the state, the Michigan Agency for Energy today is alerting utility customers that major gas and electric providers will not shut off services to customers this week.

DTE Energy Co., Consumers Energy Co., and SEMCO said they have temporarily suspended shutoffs due to inclement weather. Utilities are required to file with the Michigan Public Service Commission their [policies on extreme weather shutoffs](#). For DTE, temperature forecasts must be below 15 degrees and/or wind chills below zero for two or more consecutive days. For Consumers, it's actual temperatures below 15 degrees and/or wind chills below zero degrees.

"With the extreme weather it's vitally important that Michiganders stay safe and warm," said Madhu Anderson, deputy director of the Michigan Agency for Energy. "If anyone has trouble paying their utility bills, there are a number of options available to them, from community service agencies to low-income assistance by utilities. We urge those in need to access these critical services by calling either 211 or your local utility provider."

Nine community agencies throughout Michigan have been designated to help distribute emergency funding through the Michigan Energy Assistance Program. They are: Barry County United Way, Michigan Community Action, Salvation Army, Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Superior Watershed Partnership, The Heat and Warmth Fund, TrueNorth Community Services, United Way of Jackson County, and United Way of Southeastern Michigan. Individuals can call the statewide [helpline at 211](#) to be connected to any of the providers or other social services.

Anyone having difficulties paying utility bills should call their local electric or natural gas provider and enroll in available help programs. Customers of Consumers should call 800-477-5050; DTE, 800-477-4747; Upper Peninsula Power Co., 800-562-7680; and Upper Michigan Energy Resources Corp., 800-242-9137. Check utility websites for more information.

For issues with utilities, customers can call the MPSC Customer Assistance at 800-292-9555.

Customers are also warned to be [aware of imposters](#) who may try to take advantage of the weather situation to scam customers out of payments. Utility companies never call customers requesting immediate payment to keep services from being shut off. Nor do they ask for payment by gift card, bitcoin, or money order. If you suspect a call to be fraudulent, hang up and immediately call your utility at the telephone number on your bill and ask to speak with a customer service representative. You may also file a consumer complaint with the Michigan Department of Attorney General by visiting michigan.gov/agcomplaints or calling 1-877-765-8388.

To keep up on MAE matters: [Website](#) | [Listserv](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#) | [LinkedIn](#)

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MEDIA CONTACT:

Nick Assendelft, Michigan Agency for Energy, 517-284-8300
Customer Assistance: 800-292-9555

- [News Release Utility-shutoffs suspended.pdf](#)

Statement from Michigan Public Service Chairman concerning gas supply

01/30/2019



NEWS RELEASE

STATE EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER

Statement from Michigan Public Service Chairman concerning gas supply

“Staff from the Gas Operations Section of the Michigan Public Service Commission is on site at Consumers Energy’s Ray Township facility in Macomb County to ensure public safety following a fire involving equipment at a gas compressor station. This unfortunate incident happened at a difficult time for our state and we ask that everyone do what they can to make sure there is a plentiful supply of natural gas to keep everyone safe and warm during the extreme cold weather. Without jeopardizing safety, there are some measures Michigan residents and businesses can take to reduce gas and electric use, such as turning thermostats down a couple of degrees, blocking leaks around windows and doors, unplugging electronic devices when not in use, and adjusting staffing or processes. All state of Michigan owned facilities in the Lower-Peninsula are lowering their thermostats by 5-degrees to lessen the burden on the natural gas supply. Working together for the good of the state, we can reduce our energy use and maintain safe, reliable service.”

News Release: Avoid Cold Weather Hazards for Livestock and Pets

01/30/2019



NEWS RELEASE

STATE EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

News Release No. 5 – January 30, 2019

Avoid Cold Weather Hazards for Livestock and Pets

LANSING, MICH. In response to the extreme cold temperatures forecast this week, the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) is reminding animal owners to plan for cold, dangerous conditions that may impact the health and well-being of their pets and livestock.

"Both pets and livestock are affected by these harsh conditions and it's imperative that owners take the extra steps necessary to ensure the health and safety of their animals," said Dr. Nora Wineland, MDARD State Veterinarian "Michigan law requires owners provide an adequate supply of feed and water for their animals, shelter from the wind and other severe conditions."

As a reminder, dogs, cats, and other companion animals living inside homes may not be able to tolerate outdoor winter temperatures for long periods of time. Guardian dogs and barn cats that live outside still need dry, clean, enclosed spaces such as dog or cat houses that help retain body heat.

Other winter precautions for companion animals and livestock include:

- Protection from de-icing chemicals and anti-freeze, which are toxic to animals
- Access to clean water that is not frozen
- Increasing feed or high energy feed, which helps animals stay warm
- Shelter to allow animals to escape wind and heavy snow and maintain body temperatures
- Caution around icy areas to prevent falls and injuries
- Take special precautions if you must haul livestock in winter weather

MDARD's Generally Accepted Agricultural and Management Practices for the Care of Farm Animals (GAAMP) have specific guidance on cold weather care for livestock species. Some general precautions include:

- Ensure access to clean water that is not frozen.
- Provide additional high-quality feed, as this helps keep animals warm.
- Safeguard animals from the elements by providing shelter, like barns and/or windbreaks via wooded areas or hills to escape from the wind.

For more information on GAAMPs, visit at www.michigan.gov/gaamps

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MEDIA CONTACT:

Jennifer Holton, MDARD, 517-284-5724 or holtonj@michigan.gov

- [News Release Avoid Cold Weather Hazards for Livestock and Pets.pdf](#)

Statement from Governor Whitmer Regarding Consumers Energy's Public Call for All Customers to Voluntarily Reduce Gas Usage

01/30/2019



NEWS RELEASE

STATE EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER

Statement from Governor Whitmer Regarding Consumers Energy's Public Call for All Customers to Voluntarily Reduce Gas Usage

Gov. Gretchen Whitmer released the following statement in response to Consumers Energy calling for all customers to voluntarily reduce their gas usage as a result of an unexpected gas incident in Southeast Michigan.

"I'm coming to you now to ask for your help. Due to extremely high demand for natural gas with these record low temperatures and a facility incident, Consumers Energy has asked that everyone who is able to turn down their thermostats through Friday at noon so we can all get through this with minimal harm.

"So please: turn your thermostat down to 65 degrees or lower and amplify this message by reposting and making sure your friends, relatives and neighbors who are getting ready for bed to turn theirs down too.

"You can play a role in helping people across the state survive these extreme temperatures. Please do. We're calling on every Michigander to do your part and help us weather this storm together."

For more information or tips, visit: www.consumersenergy.com/coldweather

Contact:

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