

Franklin County Office on Aging

Franklin County Board of Commissioners
Paula Brooks Marilyn Brown John O'Grady
Antonia M. Carroll, M.A., L.S.W., Director

The Franklin County Board of Commissioners and the Franklin County Office on Aging join with the Messenger Newspapers in providing this update on aging issues in Franklin County.

Important Winter Safety Information

Winter began like a lion, but if you follow these suggestions, hopefully you will be able to tame the beast!

Choosing Alternative Heating Equipment

Central Ohio's unpredictable winter storms and subsequent power outages may prompt many to purchase alternative heating equipment. Heating equipment is a leading cause of home fires during the months of December, January and February, and trails only cooking equipment in home fires year-round. Before you buy, consider these safety tips from the National Fire Protection Association:

- When buying a new unit, make sure that a qualified technician installs the unit or checks that the unit has been installed properly.
- For wood or coal stoves or fireplaces, have a professional inspect the chimney, chimney connector and other related equipment every year, and have them cleaned as often as the inspections indicate.
- Keep space heaters at least three feet (or one meter) away from anything that can burn.
- Fuel portable kerosene heaters in a well-ventilated area away from flames or other heat sources, and only when the device has cooled completely. Use only the type of kerosene specified by the manufacturer, and never use gasoline. Use only if such heaters are legal in your community.
- When turning a heating device on or off, follow the manufacturer's instructions. When buying heaters, choose devices with automatic shut-off features.
- Make sure any gas-fueled heating device is adequately ventilated. Unventilated gas space heaters in bedrooms or bathrooms must be small and well-mounted.

- Never use liquefied-petroleum gas heaters with self-contained fuel supplies in the home.
- Portable space heaters should be turned off every time you leave a room or go to bed.
 - Install a smoke detector and carbon monoxide (CO) alarm near bedrooms and on each floor of your home. Individuals with heart disease or respiratory ailments are more susceptible to CO which is difficult to recognize since its symptoms are very similar to influenza.

Stay Warm This Winter

- When outdoors, remember to dress warmly. Wear loose-fitting, layered, lightweight clothing. Layers can be removed to prevent perspiration and chill. Outer garments should be tightly woven and water repellent. Mittens are warmer than gloves because fingers generate warmth when they touch each other. Remember to protect your lungs from extreme cold air by covering your mouth when outdoors.
- To avoid slips and falls, wear boots that are non-skid. If you use a cane, replace the rubber tip before it is worn smooth or it will become slippery, especially when it gets wet.
- Caulking or plastic sheets can protect windows and keep warm air in - also helping to minimize energy bills.
- Keep your thermostat set to 65 degrees to prevent hypothermia. Also, when the temperature remains at 65, even when you are not at home, you can help to prevent freezing pipes by maintaining a high enough temperature within your walls.

Don't Overdo

If you go out to shovel snow, do a few stretching exercises to warm up your body. Also take frequent breaks. Cold weather puts an added strain on the heart. Unaccustomed exercise such as shoveling snow can bring on a heart attack or make medical conditions worse. Protect your skin with heavier, more protective creams and lotions. In the winter, inside humidity drops to below 60 percent causing skin to lose moisture. This can cause the dryness and itching that bothers many. Even though the summer heat is gone make sure that you still drink at least six to eight glasses of liquid a day, especially in dry cold weather, to avoid dehydration. Drinking plenty of water can also help prevent dry skin problems.

In Case of Disaster or Emergency

Always keep disaster supplies on hand, in case of power outages and other emergencies. Things you should keep around the house include:

- Flashlight and extra batteries
- Portable, battery-operated radio and extra batteries
- First aid kit

- One-week supply of essential prescription medication
- Extra blankets and sleeping bags
- Fire extinguisher (A-B-C) type

If you need to get somewhere in winter weather make sure that your car has been tuned up and has good tires. Also, keep your gas tank near full and let family or friends know your travel plans including routes and times. Remember in the case of an emergency always call 911 or contact your local police station or fire department.

Sources:

- National Fire Protection Association www.nfpa.org
- U.S. Fire Administration/FEMA www.usfa.fema.gov