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EDMUND G. BROWN JR.  
Governor

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**TO:** All Facilities

**SUBJECT:** Winter Weather Emergency Preparedness Advisory

California is expected to experience a severe winter storm in some regions beginning today through Saturday, December 13<sup>th</sup>.

Winter months bring weather that can rapidly create emergency and/or disaster-related conditions. Disaster plans must take all types of hazards into account, including the possibility of severe weather caused by freeze conditions and/or winter storms. Health care facilities are required by regulation to maintain their physical plant and all equipment in operational condition. If your facility is required to maintain an emergency power source, it must be fully tested and functional in order to ensure availability in the event of a power outage.

Licensing regulations require that all emergency or disaster-related occurrences, which threaten the welfare, safety, or health of patients, must be reported to the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), Licensing and Certification (L&C) Program.

If your facility is affected by an emergency or disaster-related occurrence that results in an evacuation, transfer, or discharge of patients, you must contact CDPH L&C. Please follow the guidelines below for reporting such occurrences:

During normal business hours (8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.) contact the local CDPH L&C District Office you customarily work with for your geographic location. District Office contact information can be found on the CDPH, L&C website at:

<http://www.cdph.ca.gov/certlic/facilities/Pages/LCDistrictOffices.aspx>

For after-hour reporting or if the local CDPH L&C district office is non-operational due to the emergency or disaster, follow the process below:

For facilities outside Los Angeles County, notify the:

- State Office of Emergency Services Warning Center at (916) 845-8911; and
- Ask that they notify the CDPH duty officer

For facilities in Los Angeles County notify the:

- Los Angeles County Operator at (213) 974-1234; and
- Ask that they notify the on-call Health Facilities Inspection Division Supervisor

Attached is a document with winter weather health tips for vulnerable populations in relation to cold weather conditions.

Additional information regarding cold weather may be found at:

<http://emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/winter/>.

Current weather watches and warning may be found at:

<http://alerts.weather.gov/cap/ca.php?x=1>

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

**Original signed by Jean Iacino**

Jean Iacino  
Interim Deputy Director

Attachment

## Winter Weather Health Tips

Though most of California experiences relatively mild winters, there always exists the potential for inclement weather. This Wednesday, December 11, 2014 through Saturday, December 13, 2014, some regions in California will experience a severe winter storm bringing snow, rain, high winds, and potential flooding.

As winter progresses, the elderly, and medically fragile are particularly susceptible to the cold. Persons with poor circulation, or who take medications that can interfere with the body's ability to regulate temperature, are at risk for hypothermia.

Hypothermia is defined, by the National Institute on Aging, as when the body temperature drops below 96 degrees. Symptoms include slurred speech, sluggishness, confusion, dizziness, shallow breathing, unusual behavior, and a slow, irregular heartbeat.

If a person is suffering from hypothermia, do not give the individual caffeine, or alcohol, both of which can worsen the condition. Until medical help is available, re-warm the person starting at the core of the body. Warming arms and legs first can increase circulation of cool blood to the heart, which can lead to heart failure. Use a blanket to gradually warm the individual.

### Dehydration:

As people age, the mechanism that triggers their thirst becomes less sensitive. At the same time, a lower percentage of body weight is made up of water, leading to dehydration. It is recommended that individuals drink 6 to 8 glasses of liquid a day, especially in dry, cold weather.

### Carbon monoxide safety:

It is critical to ensure that all fuel-burning devices are properly ventilated and receive regular inspections. Fireplaces need to be kept free of debris, and chimneys and flues should be maintained. Ovens, gas, or charcoal barbecue grills should never be used for heating.

Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning are headache, dizziness, chest pain, nausea, and vomiting. In severe cases, people can become increasingly irritable, agitated and confused, eventually becoming lethargic and lapsing into unconsciousness. If you suspect carbon monoxide poisoning, call 911 and get the victim to fresh air immediately.

It is advisable to have a carbon monoxide detector and check the batteries regularly.

### If you lose heat:

Measures should be taken to trap existing warm air. If it appears the loss of heat will be of significant duration, hang blankets over windows and doorways, and move to a well-insulated room. If available, use a properly operating fireplace for heat.

### Be prepared:

Have additional battery operated lighting, phones, and radios available in the event of an extended power loss. Have a plan for how to best deal with power and heat disruptions. Common sense and preparation will go a long way to ensure patients remain comfortable and safe during winter weather emergencies.