NEWS FROM Legislator

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Legislator D'Amaro Offers Tips To Keep Residents Warm, Safe and Protected Throughout the Cold, Wintry Months

(HUNTINGTON STATION, NY... January 7, 2015) – With the cold weather here, Suffolk County Legislator Lou D'Amaro (D-Huntington Station) is pleased to share some information from the Suffolk County Department of Health Services to help keep residents and their families warm, safe and protected this winter.

Winter Weather Health Hazards

Frostbite is the freezing of skin and damage to underlying blood vessels upon exposure to extreme cold. Blood flow halts in frostbitten skin, and the area must be thawed and rewarmed swiftly to prevent tissue death (gangrene) and infection. The ears, nose, hands, and feet are particularly susceptible. Frostbite is sometimes accompanied by a life-threatening drop in internal body temperature, known as hypothermia, which must be treated first. Frostbite is not a common problem, but can be a big problem for people who do not regularly experience severe cold weather, as well as for people who do winter camping, high-altitude climbing, hunting, and snowmobiling.

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Frostnip a superficial freezing of the outer layer of the skin - also can occur if you are exposed to cold weather. The skin turns white as blood circulation decreases, then stings, and becomes quite painful.

Hypothermia is an abnormally low body temperature. When exposed to cold temperatures your body begins to lose heat faster than it can be produced. Prolonged exposure to cold will eventually use up your body's stored energy and hypothermia will result. Body temperature that is too low affects the brain, making the victim unable to think clearly or move well. A person may not realize that hypothermia is happening and won't be able to do anything about it. Victims of hypothermia are often elderly persons with inadequate food, clothing or heating, babies sleeping in cold rooms, people who remain outdoors for long periods and people who drink alcohol or use illicit drugs.

Warning signs of hypothermia are: shivering, exhaustion, confusion, fumbling hands, memory loss, slurred speech and drowsiness. Infants could have bright red cold skin and very low energy.

If a person's temperature is below 95° get medical attention immediately. While awaiting emergency medical attention, move the person to a warm room; if clothing is wet, remove it; warm the chest, neck, head and groin areas using an electric blanket if available. If the person is conscious warm liquids (non-alcoholic and decaffeinated) can increase body temperature. Severe hypothermia can cause a person to be unconscious and appear to have no pulse or be breathing. **Get emergency assistance at once.**

Whether for work or play, when spending time outdoors during the winter, it is wise to:

- Dress in layers, wearing a hat, mittens and warm insulated boots.
- Doing chores outside in cold weather can take a toll on your body. Be careful, take a break, have a hot beverage. Watch for signs of hypothermia and frostbite.
- Drive with care during ice and snow storms. Reduce your speed. Fill up your gas tank and stay on main well-traveled roads.
- Do be sure to have your cell phone charged and with you.
- Don't drive when conditions deteriorate and become dangerous.

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At home:

- Check your heating system, maintaining a sufficient supply of fuel to carry you through a number of days when the roads may be impassable and a delivery impossible.
- If your electricity and heating system go off, to keep pipes from freezing let your water run at a trickle.
- Do not run a generator, grill, camp stove, or other gasoline, propane, natural gas or charcoal burning device inside your home or garage! Dangerous carbon monoxide fumes can cause sickness or death.
- Have a sufficient supply of food, water, medications, warm clothing, and blankets, as well as other supplies necessary to ride out a power outage in the cold.
- Bring your pets indoors.

"Winter on Long Island is a true wonderland with lots of to see, explore and do outdoors, as well as the opportunity to enjoy quality time indoors with family and friends," said Legislator D'Amaro. "By following a few, simple guidelines and tips, we can ensure that activities remain fun and safe."

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Suffolk County Legislator Lou D'Amaro represents the 17th Legislative District, which includes parts of Huntington, Huntington Station, South Huntington, Melville, West Hills, Cold Spring Hills, Dix Hills, Deer Park, North Babylon and West Babylon. He is chairman of the Ways & Means committee and vice chairman of both the Parks & Recreation and Economic Development & Energy committees of the Suffolk County Legislature.