

HELPING YOU STAY SAFE AND WARM THIS WINTER

Derbyshire residents are being reminded to follow advice to keep themselves, neighbours and vulnerable people safe and warm during the snow and severe weather.

Derbyshire County Council is working with Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Service, Derbyshire police, East Midlands Ambulance Service, the primary care trust^s and voluntary groups to draw up contingency plans to make sure services continue to run as normally as possible in what is the worst winter weather the county has had to deal with in 30 years.

County council Cabinet Member for Communities Councillor Carol Hart said: "We want to be as prepared as possible for any problems caused by the severe weather and are in regular touch with our partner organisations to ensure plans are in place.

"These plans will help to ensure services run as normally as possible, but meanwhile it is always wise to bear in mind some simple tips to stay safe and warm over the cold spell in cases of emergency."

Tips include:

- Maintaining portable gas heaters and checking electric fires are fitted with the right fuse and don't have frayed or damaged cables
- Ensuring central heating boilers are serviced regularly.
- Making sure, if you have an open fire, that your chimney is swept regularly
- Ensuring paraffin heaters are thoroughly cleaned and the wick checked and trimmed.
- Making sure portable heaters have a safety guard and not placing them near furniture, beds or curtains.
- Having electric blankets serviced at least every three years

The county council's highways team is also offering some advice on staying safe on the roads during bad weather.

- Only travel if your journey is really necessary.
- In icy conditions slow down, steer gently and avoid harsh braking.
- Use dipped headlights if driving during snowfalls.
- Check your lights are working and your windscreen washer is full.
- If going on a long journey take a shovel, torch, boots, warm clothing, food and a hot drink and charged mobile telephone.

Councillor Hart added: "We know from experience that prolonged spells of severe weather can cause problems but if we all take extra care and look out for our elderly or vulnerable neighbours, we can minimise disruption and stay safe."

The Department of Health has issued advice particularly aimed at older people.

- Keep warm at all times - wear clothing in layers and keep moving if possible.

- Keep rooms – including the bedroom – warm and close windows. If your house is cold, body temperature will drop and catching a cold is more likely.
- Warm the bedroom and bed before turning in for the night. Your bedroom should be kept above 18°C overnight.
- If you are eligible for a flu jab make sure you have it.
- If you are over 60, money is available for winter fuel bills and you may receive payments if the weather gets very cold.
- Looking out for neighbours. If you have an older person as a neighbour or a relative, please look out for them in the winter months to ensure they have enough heat and food.
- Keep an eye out for bogus officials who may call door-to-door without an appointment claiming to be from heating supply or other companies checking for problems caused by the cold weather. Always check the identity of callers to your home and if in doubt call the police.

For more information about how to help keep safe and warm this winter visit www.derbyshire.gov.uk , www.derbyshire-fire-service.co.uk or www.derbyshire.police.uk or call the Winter Warmth Advice Line free on **0800 085 7000**.

If you are concerned about an older person or a vulnerable adult Call Derbyshire on **08456 058 058**.