



---

**KENT COUNTY SHERIFF DEPARTMENT**  
**Lawrence A. Stelma – Sheriff**

---

701 Ball Avenue, N.E. • Grand Rapids • Michigan • 49503



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**January 27, 2014**

**Contact: Lisa LaPlante – 616.632.7182**

**Dangerously Cold Wind Chills Prompt  
Health and Safety Concerns**

**GRAND RAPIDS** – Emergency responders have been busy due to a high volume of slide-offs and accidents caused by winter weather conditions. Wind chills will be at dangerous levels tonight and tomorrow night. Kent County Emergency Management is encouraging residents to stay home if possible during the extremely cold temperatures and wind chills.

“Salt is not effective in the extreme cold, so the roads can be treacherous in some places,” says Jack Stewart, Kent County Emergency Management Coordinator. “If you must drive in these conditions, allow plenty of extra time to reach your destination. Keep a cell phone in the car, as well as an emergency kit and blanket within your reach.”

The cold can cause problems for many, especially young children, people with pre-existing medical conditions, and seniors. “Be vigilant. Check on your family, and check on your neighbors, especially those who are elderly” Stewart adds. “If someone appears to be very tired or lethargic, is having trouble breathing or talking, shivers or fumbles his or her hands, or seems confused, call 911 immediately. Try to keep the person warm until help arrives.”

Some people are also susceptible to respiratory issues in the cold. For those with asthma, the cold can also trigger an attack. Be sure children with asthma are wearing a scarf, and if they appear to have trouble breathing, get them to a warm, sheltered area immediately. Adults should refrain from exercising or exerting energy in extreme cold.

If you are going outdoors, wear layers of light, warm clothing, mittens or gloves, hats, scarves, and waterproof boots. Anyone with exposed skin can suffer frostbite in a matter of minutes in these frigid temperatures. Frostbite most often affects the extremities: nose, ears, cheeks, fingers, or toes. Redness, numbness or pain, white or grayish-yellow skin, or skin that feels unusually firm or waxy may be frostbitten. Get the person into a warm room, and immerse the skin in warm (not hot) water.

Finally, Stewart recommends keeping pets indoors as much as possible. Make sure they are on a leash or in a fenced in area when they need to relieve themselves. The smaller the pet, the quicker the cold impacts them. Puppies and kittens are especially sensitive to the cold, as are older pets. Watch out for community cats that might crawl under the hood of your car to keep warm. Bang loudly on the hood before starting the car, and never leave pets in a car during the winter. Temperatures can be just as cold inside the car as they are outdoors.

If you have a non-emergency need due to the cold, call the United Way 211 line for assistance.

###