

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE FOR PUBLIC HEALTH RESPONSE TO WINTER STORMS

The Bergen County Office of Emergency Management (BCOEM) continuously monitors weather conditions throughout the area. Notification of impending storms is also made through the National Weather Service. The BCOEM will alert the County Executive and the Bergen County Department of Health Services (BCDHS) to increasingly dangerous winter weather conditions.

The National Weather Service issues the following levels of warning:

- **Frost/Freeze Warning:** Below freezing temperatures are expected and may cause significant damage to plants, crops or fruit trees.
- **Winter Weather Advisory:** Winter weather conditions are expected to cause significant inconveniences and may be hazardous. The greatest hazard is to motorists.
- **Winter Storm Watch:** Severe winter conditions, such as heavy snow and/or ice, are possible within the next day or two. Prepare now!
- **Winter Storm Warning:** Severe winter conditions have begun or are about to begin in your area. Stay indoors!
- **Blizzard Warning:** Snow and strong winds will combine to produce a blinding snow with near zero visibility, deep drifts, and life threatening wind chill. Seek refuge immediately!

These storms typically occur during the winter months of December through March but also can occur in late fall and early spring. Winter storms can last several days and be accompanied by high winds, freezing rain or sleet, and extreme cold. People can become stranded on the road or trapped at home without utilities or other services.

When winter weather conditions threaten to become severe and/or involve a large number of people or communities, the BCDHS Health Officer, Public Health Coordinator and/or the Environmental Health Coordinator will be asked to participate with the BCOEM at the Command Center in Room 207 of the Community Services Building at 327 Ridgewood Ave. in Paramus.

The role of the Health Officer is to direct Public Health personnel, to provide Public Health Consultation and participate in communication with the public, the media, contracting towns and other Bergen County Health Officer jurisdictions. Communication to other Health Officers and Local Boards of Health will be handled through the LINCS communication system or the Health Department's broadcast FAX.

Key staff members (Chief Sanitarian, Nursing Director and Health Educator) will be put on alert. Transportation to the Command Center can be arranged through county or local police or through the Environmental Division if personal transportation is inadequate and participation is

warranted. The Chief Sanitarian will direct the activities of Public Health Inspectors in the event of disruption to water or power supplies in contracting towns. The Health Educator will assist in the preparation and dissemination of public information and press releases as requested. The LINCS Administrator will handle E-mail communication and web site information.



Web Site Questions/Comments: healthdept@bergenhealth.org

**Bergen County Department of Health Services
327 East Ridgewood Avenue, Paramus, NJ 07652-4895
Tel:(201) 634-2600 Fax: (201)986-1068**