

State Urges Preparedness Ahead of Winter Weather

With a new round of winter storms set to enter the state late Thursday, the Kansas Division of Emergency Management is again urging Kansans to make sure they are prepared.

“The National Weather Service is forecasting, widespread accumulating snow likely by late Sunday,” said Angee Morgan, deputy director of KDEM.

Morgan said snowfall accumulation will vary from 1-3 inches in some areas to about 4-6 inches in other areas. She added there is even a potential for higher amounts if a heavy snow band develops early Sunday, but development of this band is uncertain.

“If you plan to travel, use caution and make sure your car emergency kit is stocked,” said Morgan. Morgan said KDEM will be monitoring the weather and will activate the State Emergency Operations center in Topeka, if needed, to coordinate any state emergency response operations that might be requested.

A car emergency kit should include bottled water for everyone; nonperishable, high-energy snack items; flashlights and batteries; a battery-operated radio; blankets; a compact snow shovel; extra medications; signal flares and other emergency supplies to allow you to survive until help can arrive. Morgan said it is also advisable to fill your gas tank before you start, check engine fluid levels and tire pressure, and to make sure your cell phone is fully charged.

The entire state will see accumulating snow with the greatest amounts expected to fall generally along the I-70 corridor, beginning with light snow in the Northwest region late Thursday afternoon and moving slowly east across the state. Some areas may see a wintry mix or rain and freezing rain with minor ice glazing. Most regions will see the snow end by Sunday, although some areas may have precipitation lingering into early next week.

In the Northeast region of the state, including Topeka, the first wave of moderate snow should begin between 9 a.m. and 9 p.m. on Saturday. There may be a brief lull around midnight before snow redevelops early Sunday morning. Snow should come to an end by Sunday evening, but could end by noon if the Sunday snow band is weaker than expected.

Morgan said that even if you plan to stay home, it is a good idea to make sure your home emergency kit is well-stocked, too. Although the storms are not expected to affect power lines, the possibility of power failures always exists.

“Keep your family safe by making sure you have your emergency supplies up-to-date, including a safe alternative heat source,” said Morgan.

Morgan said kerosene heaters are generally safe when used properly and a fireplace can provide some warmth, provided it is drawing properly. She said never attempt to use a charcoal grill as a heat source.

“Charcoal generates carbon monoxide, which can be deadly in enclosed spaces,” said Morgan. “Outdoors, in a barbecue, charcoal is fine, but never use it indoors.”

In the event of power outages, Morgan suggested checking on neighbors to make sure they are all right, particularly older neighbors.

After the storm, when shoveling snow, Morgan urged continued caution.

“Bundle up with a heavy coat, hat and gloves,” she said. “Be smart as you work. Don’t over-exert yourself and take frequent warming breaks. Work as a team or at least have someone inside to keep an eye on you as you work.”

Outdoor pets are especially vulnerable to bitter cold and extreme wind chills. Bring outdoor pets inside if possible or ensure that they have a draft-free enclosure with straw type bedding that is large enough to sit and lie down, but small enough to hold their body heat if they must remain outside. Always make sure that your pets have access to food and non-frozen water.

For additional pet safety information, go www.avma.org.

For more winter weather preparedness tips, go online to www.ksready.gov, www.ready.gov or call your county emergency management office.

State road and travel conditions may be accessed at the Kansas Department of Transportation KanDrive website www.kandrive.org or on a mobile device, go to 511mm.ksdot.org. You may also call 5-1-1 from any phone.

Information on winter driving tips is available from the Kansas Highway Patrol at www.kansashighwaypatrol.org/press/news_info/winter_drive.html You may also follow the Kansas Highway Patrol on Facebook and Twitter at www.kansashighwaypatrol.org.

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