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NEWS RELEASE

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**GNR PUBLIC HEALTH URGES PUBLIC TO PREPARE
FOR WINTER WEATHER AND POWER OUTAGES**

Protecting Your Family from Power Outages, Food Spoilage, and Safe Heating

[LAWRENCEVILLE, GA] — As winter storm threats increase, GNR Public Health is urging residents to take proactive steps to ensure safety during cold weather, potential power outages, and travel disruptions. Winter storms can cause severe disruptions, making it crucial to prepare in advance.

"Winter weather can knock out power and restrict travel," says Zachary Taylor, M.D., M.S., interim district health director. "Being prepared means having a plan and necessary supplies. We encourage everyone to check on neighbors, particularly the elderly or those with functional needs."

Power Outage Readiness

- Prepare Now: Build an emergency kit with non-perishable food, water, flashlights, extra batteries, a battery-powered or hand-crank NOAA Weather Radio, medications, and a manual can opener.
- Charge Devices: Keep cell phones and backup chargers charged.
- Prevent Pipes from Freezing: Insulate your pipes with foam insulation sleeves or heat tape. Disconnect and drain outdoor hoses. If the indoor temperature in your home is below 55 degrees Fahrenheit (13°C), allow faucets to drip to help prevent freezing.
- NEVER use candles due to the risk of fire. Use flashlights instead.

Perishable Food Safety

- During an Outage: Keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed. A refrigerator will keep food cold for approximately 4 hours; a full freezer will maintain temperature for approximately 48 hours.
- Use Coolers: If the outage lasts more than 4 hours, move perishable items to a cooler packed with ice or snow.
- "When in Doubt, Throw it Out!": Throw away any food exposed to temperatures 40 degrees Fahrenheit (4°C) or higher for two hours or more, or that has an unusual odor, color, or texture.

Safe Alternative Heating Sources

- Monitor for Carbon Monoxide (CO): Install or check that carbon monoxide detectors are working on every level of your home.
- Generator Safety: ONLY use generators outdoors, at least 20 feet away from windows, doors, and vents, to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning.
- Prevent House Fires: Keep anything that can burn at least three feet from all heat sources, including fireplaces, wood stoves, radiators, or space heaters.
- NEVER use charcoal grills, camp stoves, or generators inside your home, garage, or basement.
- NEVER use a gas stovetop or oven to heat your home. Carbon monoxide poisoning could occur.

General Winter Safety

- Wear Layers of Warm Clothing: Layering clothing can help you stay warm, and is especially helpful for children and older people. Young children, particularly infants, are at risk for hypothermia.
- Stay Informed: Monitor local weather forecasts and official news channels.
- Follow Local Travel Recommendations: Postpone non-essential travel during unsafe conditions.

For more information and to create your family's emergency plan, visit Ready.gov.

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GNR Public Health is the local health department that provides essential core public health functions and services to help keep Gwinnett, Newton, and Rockdale healthy, protected, and prepared. Learn more at www.gnrhealth.com.