POLAR AIR MASS TO BRING FREEZING TEMPERATURES ACROSS FLORIDA TONIGHT THROUGH WEDNESDAY

TALLAHASSEE - Florida Division of Emergency Management officials are urging residents and visitors throughout Florida to prepare for temperatures near or below the freezing mark tonight and is expected to continue through Wednesday. Very strong northwesterly winds will be pushing a polar air mass into the southeast throughout the next few days and will push wind chill values into the teens. A Wind Chill Advisory is in effect for all of Florida tonight.

“This system will bring not only extremely cold temperatures and wind chill, but will also bring with it very dry weather,” said Division of Emergency Management Director David Halstead. “These dry conditions make it very possible for dangerous wildfires to occur and spread. We encourage all Floridians to not only practice cold weather safety, but to protect themselves and their property from wildfires.”


Starting tonight, Freeze Warnings will be in effect for the counties of Brevard, Desoto, Hardee, Highlands, Hillsborough, Indian River, Lake, Manatee, Martin, Okeechobee, Orange, Osceola, Polk, Sarasota, Seminole, St. Lucie, and Volusia. Glades, Hendry and Palm Beach counties will also be under a Freeze Warning.

Similar conditions are expected throughout the next few days. A Freeze Watch is in effect from late Monday night through Tuesday morning for much of Central and South Florida. A Hard Freeze Watch will be in effect for the same North Florida areas’ following tonight’s warning.

Overall, dangerous temperatures and wind chill values will affect most of the state tonight. If residents must venture outdoors, make sure to take all precautions necessary to protect yourself and your family.

Wind Chill Advisories or Warnings mean the combination of very cold air and strong winds will make temperatures feel colder than they actually are. Hard Freeze Warnings and Freeze Warnings are issued when sub-freezing temperatures are imminent or highly likely for a prolonged period of time.

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These conditions can kill crops and other sensitive vegetation. Young children, the elderly and the homeless are especially vulnerable to the cold so take measures to protect them. Exposed water pipes need to have adequate protection from the cold temperatures.

Residents and visitors should remember the "Five P's" of cold weather safety. The "5 P's" are: Protecting People, Protecting Plants, Protecting Pets, Protecting Exposed Pipes, and Practicing Fire Safety.

The following actions are important safety measures:

- Stay indoors and use safe heating sources.
- Be aware of the fire danger from space heaters and candles. Keep such devices away from all flammable materials such as curtains and furniture, and install recommended smoke and carbon monoxide detectors.
- Indoors: Do not use charcoal or other fuel-burning devices, such as grills that produce carbon monoxide. Install at least one carbon monoxide detector per floor in your home.
- Outdoors: Stay dry and in wind-protected areas.
- Wear multiple layers of loose-fitting, warm clothing.
- Drink non-alcoholic fluids.
- Shelter or bring inside animals, especially pets.

For more information on the Florida Division of Emergency Management and to GET A PLAN!, please visit: www.FloridaDisaster.org. Follow us on Twitter at www.Twitter.com/flsertinfo or join our blog at: http://flsertinfo.blogspot.com/.

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