FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 20, 2009

FLORIDA OFFICIALS URGE FIRE SAFETY AS COLD WEATHER CONTINUES THIS WEEK

~ Lowest temperatures of the year forecast for most of the state by Wednesday, Thursday mornings ~

TALLAHASSEE - State emergency management and fire officials are urging residents throughout the Sunshine State to check their heating appliances, smoke detectors and chimneys as the latest in a series of arctic cold fronts will bring the coldest weather of the winter to the Florida peninsula during the next few days.

Freezing temperatures are forecast to plunge into interior sections of South Florida on Wednesday and Thursday mornings. Strong northerly winds on Tuesday night and Wednesday morning will bring near freezing wind chills into metropolitan southeast Florida. Wind chill advisories are in effect on Wednesday night and Thursday morning for most of South Florida. A light freeze could extend into the Lake Okeechobee region, the Treasure Coast and portions of southwest Florida on Thursday morning. Dangerous fire weather conditions will also persist statewide through Thursday. By taking basic safety precautions, residents can reduce their chances of fire, property damage and loss of life.

“Freezing temperatures could persist through Friday morning across much of the Florida peninsula,” said State Meteorologist Ben Nelson. “To ward off this cold spell, many residents may be turning on space heaters and using fireplaces and we are urging them to do so safely.”

Please remember to practice the "5 P’s of cold weather safety” this week:

1. Protect People 
2. Protect Pets 
3. Protect Plants 
4. Protect Exposed Pipes 
5. Practice Fire Safety

Residents should check the operation of their smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors, making sure to replace the old batteries. Electrical extension cords need to be in proper condition and correct rating for the heater. Persons should not overload wall plugs and individual circuits with multiple appliances.

Some important safety tips to keep in mind from the Division of State Fire Marshal:

- Have gas heaters and other gas appliances checked for leaks or damage.
- Check and clean air conditioners for any dust that could spark a fire when turned on for the first time.
- Keep space heaters at least three feet away from furniture, walls and drapes.
- Clean chimneys regularly and do not burn anything in the fireplace other than firewood.
Keep children and pets away from any flame or fire source. Review and practice your family’s fire escape plan.

You can find more seasonal fire safety tips on the State Fire Marshal’s web site at www.fldfs.com/sfm where you would select Fire Safety Information index.

For more information on the Florida Division of Emergency Management and to GET A PLAN, go to: www.Floridadisaster.org

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