

Media Release

5 February 2021

New severe cold weather warning for Kent residents

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Severe weather forecast for the South East this weekend could cause major health risks and residents are urged to follow simple steps to help vulnerable friends, families and neighbours.

A level three cold weather warning has been called for the region by the Met Office which triggers actions in the NHS, public health, social care and other community organisations, to support vulnerable people who have health issues that increase their risk of harm.

The Met Office reports a 90% probability of severe cold weather in Southeast England from Saturday morning through to Wednesday (10 February) with low temperatures, ice and snow.

With the cold weather alert and ongoing risks from Covid-19 to the most vulnerable members of the community, it is

important that people are making sure they are following basic, common sense advice to help keep themselves warm and well.

KCC Deputy Director for Public Health, Allison Duggal said: "It is vital that during this prolonged period of severe weather, people act to keep themselves and their home warm – even if this is just by heating the bedroom and living room. We're also urging people to assist their local community – is there someone you can help by bringing groceries? Every year, cold weather leads to extra deaths and this year we also need to help protect those most at risk of severe symptoms from Covid so by taking measures to stay warm and work with others, can make a life-changing difference."

Nationally, there are thousands of excess winter deaths per year because of a drop in temperature. The ideal indoor temperature is 18-21°C (65-75°F). If trying to save fuel, it is advisable to heat the living room during the day, the bathroom when needed and the bedroom, just before going to bed.

Other simple common sense measures for keeping warm and well in the home include:

- Regular cups of tea, or other hot drinks, and regular hot meals can help your body stay warm.
- Make sure warm clothes are within reach – keep jumpers and thick socks close by. Wear several thin layers, rather than one thick one.
- Have your flu vaccine to protect yourself and others (this is free for anyone over 65, pregnant women, those with long term conditions, and children aged two to four – contact your GP to make an appointment).
- Order repeat prescriptions in good time to make sure you have enough supply of any medicines you use.
- Having a family member, friend or neighbour to help out with anything from putting the bin out to collecting prescriptions or doing shopping but please bear in mind social distancing measures.
- Have your heating and cooking appliances checked regularly and make sure the chimney has been swept recently.

Preparing for very cold weather means being ready to stay indoors, making sure there is enough food and medicine at home, ordering repeat prescriptions in plenty of time, particularly if bad weather is forecast. If you have to travel or go outdoors, tips to follow include:

- Wear layers of warm clothing and shoes with slip resistant, good grip soles
- Make sure you are not caught out by snow and ice; stay tuned to the weather forecast and plan ahead with food supplies
- Get up-to-date traffic information at www.kenttraffic.info

People are urged not to go to A&E or call 999 unless it's an emergency. If you are in any doubt, NHS111 can help you get the right treatment.

More information is available about how to keep yourself and others safe during cold weather

through www.kent.gov.uk/winterhealth You can also find information on Covid-19 including details on the NHS Test and Trace app, symptoms and getting a test at www.kent.gov.uk/kentprotect