

Winter Weather Can Be Source Of Hidden Dangers *Project Impact Offers Tips To Prevent Winter Damage*



(NAPS)—When most Americans worry about disasters, winter storms rarely rank at the top of their list. But as the season kicks into high gear, people everywhere must be aware that winter weather poses hidden threats. However, enacting preventive measures beforehand can significantly reduce those dangers.

Roofs risk collapse under the weight of heavy snow, and weak tree limbs coated with ice and snow buildup can become dangerous hazards. A burst pipe can potentially ruin a home's interior. House fires pose an additional risk, as more people turn to alternate heating sources without taking the necessary safety precautions.

In fact, last year winter weather caused nearly \$62 million in damage, according to the National Weather Service.

To cut back on winter damage, the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) *Project Impact: Building Disaster Resistant Communities*, is encouraging people to take preventive actions now.

"Many people don't realize winter weather can cause severe damage to your home," said FEMA Director James Lee Witt. "But there are simple actions you can take in advance to ensure your home is a safe haven to wait out the storm."

Winter storms can often last for days, and usually are accompanied by high winds, freezing rain or sleet, heavy snowfall and cold temperature that can inflict costly

structural damage to homes.

To protect yourself and your home in advance from the dangers associated with winter weather, *Project Impact* recommends:

- Hiring a contractor to check the structural ability of the roof to sustain unusually heavy weight from snow accumulation.
- Cutting away tree branches that could fall on a house or other structure during a storm.
- Clearing leaves and other debris from gutters.
- Repairing roof leaks.
- Insulating pipes with insulation or newspapers and plastic to keep them from freezing and allowing faucets to drip a little during cold weather to avoid freezing.
- Keeping heaters at least three feet from flammable objects.
- Avoiding the use of kerosene heaters, which pose significant risk. If you must use one, refuel outside.
- Learning how to shut off water valves.
- Promptly removing ice and snow from tree limbs, roof and other structures.

Project Impact has been changing the way America deals with disasters since 1997. The nationwide initiative began with seven pilot communities and today boasts nearly 250 designated communities and more than 2,500 business partners.

For more information about Project Impact, visit www.fema.gov/impact or call 202-646-4117.