**NEWS RELEASE**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** Contact: (614) 728-0253
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**Department of Aging urges Older Ohioans to prepare for Winter Storm Harper**

*Check on older loved ones before, during and after the storm*

**Columbus, Ohio** – Winter Storm Harper is expected to cross the Ohio region this weekend, bringing with it the potential for high snowfall amounts, ice accumulations and bitter cold temperatures that could lead to hazardous road conditions, utility outages and more. The Ohio Department of Aging urges older adults to prepare for the storm and calls on all Ohioans to check on older loved ones and neighbors.

“An event like Winter Storm Harper presents significant risks for all Ohioans, but older adults can be at increased risk from the storm’s effect,” said Ursel McElroy, director of the department. “Physical changes, isolation and other factors can make older adults more susceptible to weather’s wrath, so it’s important to plan ahead and check in on each other.”

The department’s “Safe at Home” web page ([www.aging.ohio.gov/safeathome](http://www.aging.ohio.gov/safeathome)) includes resources for older Ohioans to be prepared for emergencies. Advice includes:

* **Create an emergency kit** that contains a battery-operated radio, a flashlight, extra batteries, drinking water, food that can be prepared without electricity, extra blankets and a first aid kit.
* **Check your medication supplies** to ensure you have enough to last through the storm. Keep list of the medications you so you can share with first responders in an emergency.
* **Check medical equipment and assistive devices** (such as canes, walkers, wheelchairs, lifts and oxygen tanks), ensuring they are in good shape and are easy to locate in an emergency. Have non-powered options for equipment that won’t work during a power outage.
* **Know where main valves and switches are for utilities** such as gas, water and electricity and make sure you can access and operate them.
* **Designate a safe place to go**, such as a friend or neighbor’s house, warming center or community shelter. Have a plan for getting there if it is unsafe to stay at home.
* **Ask a reliable family member, friend or neighbor to visit or call** regularly to make sure you are OK. Have a plan for what they should do if they can’t reach you.

Your area agency on aging can help identify emergency resources and services in your community. Visit the Ohio Department of Aging’s website ([www.aging.ohio.gov](http://www.aging.ohio.gov)) for contacts or call 1-866-243-5678 to be connected to the agency serving your community.

[MORE]

The Department of Aging encourages all Ohioans to check in on older loved ones, friends and neighbors before, during and after the storm to ensure that they have the resources they need to remain safe and healthy. Here are some things to ask about when you visit.

* Do they need medical attention? Have they fallen? Are they staying warm enough? Are they taking their medications as prescribed?
* Do they have safe food and water? Are they eating and drinking regularly?
* Is the temperature in their home comfortable? Do they have safe means to heat the home if temperatures continue to fall?
* Whom will they call if they need help? Do they have access to a phone that will work without power or landline service?

If you or an older loved one become ill or injured during the storm, or if it becomes unsafe to stay in your home for any reason, call 9-1-1 for emergency assistance.

Follow the Ohio Department of Aging on [Facebook](http://www.facebook.com/ohiodepartmentofaging) and [Twitter](http://www.twitter.com/OhioDeptOfAging/) for more winter safety information and resources throughout the storm and all winter long. The Ohio Department of Aging is a proud member of the Ohio Committee for Severe Weather Awareness. Learn more at www.weathersafety.ohio.gov.

**About ODA –** The Ohio Department of Aging serves and advocates for the needs of Ohioans age 60 and older, as well as their families, caregivers and communities. Programs include home and community based long-term supports and services, as well as initiatives to promote health and wellness throughout the lifespan. Visit www.aging.ohio.gov.

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