



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Contacts:

Barbara Mitchell, Public Information Officer
Barbara.mitchell@jocogov.org

Jennifer Dunlay, Risk Communicator
Jennifer.Dunlay@jocogov.org

Johnson County Department of Health and Environment Media Line: (913) 477-8436

Johnson County Libraries available as warming centers

JOHNSON COUNTY, KANSAS (Nov. 14, 2014) – The Johnson County Department of Health and Environment, in cooperation with the Johnson County Library, encourages citizens who need a place to warm up during below freezing temperatures to visit one of the Johnson County library branches. All of these facilities will be available during normal business hours.

Libraries offer many services in addition to a warm place to rest and restore. You can read books, magazines and newspapers, or access the Internet. Library hours vary by location. Call (913) 826-4600 to check hours of operation for your nearest library branch, or visit the Library web site at www.jocolibrary.org.

Serious health problems can result from prolonged exposure to the cold. The most common cold-related problems are hypothermia and frostbite. When exposed to cold temperatures, the body begins to lose heat faster than it can be produced. Prolonged exposure to cold will eventually use up the body's stored energy and result in hypothermia, or abnormally low body temperature.

Warnings signs of hypothermia are shivering, exhaustion, confusion, fumbling hands, memory loss, slurred speech and drowsiness. Seek medical attention quickly if you have these symptoms.

Frostbite causes a loss of feeling and color in affected areas. It most often affects the nose, ears, cheeks, chin, fingers or toes. Frostbite can permanently damage the body, and severe cases can lead to amputation. The risk of frostbite is increased in people with reduced blood circulation and among people who are not dressed properly for extremely cold temperatures.

At the first signs of redness or pain in any skin area, get out of the cold or protect any exposed skin—frostbite may be beginning. A victim is often unaware of frostbite until someone else points it out because the frozen tissues are numb. If you detect symptoms of frostbite, seek medical care.

If there is frostbite, but no sign of hypothermia and immediate medical care is not available, proceed as follows:

- Get into a warm room as soon as possible.
- Unless absolutely necessary, do not walk on frostbitten feet or toes—this increases the damage.

(more)

- Immerse the affected area in warm—not hot—water (the temperature should be comfortable to the touch for unaffected parts of the body).
- Or, warm the affected area using body heat. For example, the heat of an armpit can be used to warm frostbitten fingers.
- Do not rub the frostbitten area with snow or massage it at all. This can cause more damage.
- Don't use a heating pad, heat lamp or the heat of a stove, fireplace or radiator for warming. Affected areas are numb and can be easily burned.

###

About Johnson County, Kansas

Located in the southwestern quadrant of the Kansas City Metropolitan Region, Johnson County, Kansas is a community of choice with a current population of more than 560,000, making it the most populated of the 105 counties in Kansas, but traditionally having the lowest mill levy in the state. For more information visit the county's website at www.jocogov.org.