

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WINTER WEATHER PREPAREDNESS WEEK

(DENVER) -- Governor Bill Ritter, Jr. has declared October 19 – 25, 2008, Winter Weather Preparedness Week in Colorado. The back-to-back blizzards at the end of 2006 left thousands of people stranded in their homes for days, closed schools, businesses, and even the Denver International Airport. Those blizzards resulted in the Governor declaring a State emergency and requesting (and receiving) two Presidential Snow Emergency Declarations for Colorado.

“This blizzard really emphasized how critical personal preparedness is,” said Hans Kallam, Director of the Colorado Division of Emergency Management. “People need to listen to severe weather warnings, stay home when roads can’t be safely traveled, and be prepared with emergency supplies in advance of the storm.”

The Colorado Division of Emergency Management, National Weather Service, Rocky Mountain Insurance Information Association, and local emergency management community stress the importance of families and individuals assembling an emergency supplies kit for any kind of emergency or disaster Coloradans might face like winter storms, floods, or wildfires.

Kallam points out, “We all need to have emergency kits for the home and car and we need to use common sense regarding travel in deteriorating conditions. Severe weather can strike quickly, with little warning. Local officials and emergency personnel work to clear the roads and restore any disrupted services caused by a storm, but this can take hours, and sometimes days.”

Most of the damage caused by winter weather is covered by your homeowner insurance policy, but that can mean costly claims and major headaches for homeowners. "As Coloradans gear up for winter weather they need to make sure that along with the hats and gloves, they protect themselves from the damage that snow, ice and cold temperatures can cause," says Carole Walker, Executive Director of the Rocky Mountain Insurance Information Association.

"The 2006 blizzards were a reminder that heavy snow, ice damming and frozen pipes can add up to expensive repairs that with a little preventative homeowner maintenance can be avoided," said Walker.

Are you prepared?

Keep enough basic supplies in your home to meet your needs for at least three days. A description of what's contained in a 72-Hour Family Emergency Kit may be found on the Colorado Division of Emergency Management (CDEM) website at http://dola.colorado.gov/dem/public_information/emergency_kit.htm.

Items to consider when preparing an emergency kit include:

- batteries,
- medications,
- flashlight,
- a battery-operated radio for updates on emergency conditions,
- water,
- non-perishable foods, and
- a manual can opener.

The 72-Hour Family Emergency Kit also details what you might need in your car's emergency kit if a severe winter storm were to strike unexpectedly while traveling.

Governor Ritter's proclamation states that, "Experience has demonstrated that an informed and prepared citizenry and organized disaster emergency teams can help the public to better cope with and survive the effects of severe winter weather."

Winter weather in Colorado can change rapidly, and it is important to be prepared for these rapid changes.

The National Weather Service (NWS) can alert you of potential winter storms as far as seven days in advance, and will issue watches up to three days in advance of a storm, and warnings when there is a high confidence of a storm in the next 12 to 36 hours. When you hear the watches and warnings, you should check your family's 72 hour emergency kits, make sure your vehicle is prepared for winter driving conditions, and consider adjusting travel plans.

Learn what you need to do to keep safe this winter. Tips on protecting your home and your family may also be found on the CDEM website under a special Winter Weather Preparedness section at http://dola.colorado.gov/dem/public_information/winter/winter_week.htm.

The latest weather forecasts, and winter watches and warnings are available at <http://www.weather.gov/den> in northeast Colorado, <http://www.weather.gov/gjt> in western Colorado, <http://www.weather.gov/pub> in southeast Colorado and <http://www.weather.gov/gld> in extreme eastern Colorado. Link to the Colorado Department of Transportation for road conditions: <http://www.cotrip.org/>. For tips on how to protect your home from severe winter weather, link to the Rocky Mountain Insurance Information Association website at: <http://www.rmiia.org>.