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Heavy, wet snow means take care when shoveling

KCEAA reminds public to take it easy during time of extreme cold

With large accumulations of heavy, wet snow blanketing the Kanawha Valley, the Kanawha County Emergency Ambulance Authority is reminding the public to be careful during times of extreme cold.

According to the American Heart Association, many people do not know the dangers of being outdoors in cold weather. Physical exertion, particularly snow shoveling, in frigid weather can result in back strain, muscles aches and sudden heart attacks.

Sudden exertion, such as lifting a heavy shovel full of snow, can be especially risky. Even walking through wet, heavy snow can strain the heart.

Here are some common tips to prevent injuries and emergency room visits, for those who choose to snow shovel:

- *Be prepared* - Avoid using caffeine or smoking before going outside to shovel snow, as stimulants can cause blood vessels to contract and pulse to increase. Home owners should also dress in layers and drink plenty of water before shoveling snow.
- *Stretch and warm up before* - Stretch out back, arm, and leg muscles before clearing snow from driveways and sidewalks. March in place for a little while or do some kind of warm up exercise before starting to shovel snow. This helps muscles get loose and decreases the risk of injury.

- *Proper posture* - When shoveling snow, it is important to stand with feet shoulder width apart and facing the direction in which you are shoveling. Lift and bend at the knees and if you are in pain, stop shoveling immediately. Don't twist at the waist or try to bend when moving snow. Instead, move and turn towards the place where the snow is supposed to go, and drop it there.
- *Shovel in small sections* Instead of trying to lift multiple inches of snow in one shovel scoop, shovel snow in layers to prevent overloading the shovel. By shoveling less snow more often, the risk of injury decreases.

KCEAA urges the public to use caution during this time of extreme weather.

For more information, contact Carolyn Charnock at 304.345.2312 ext. 175

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