

Winter Weather

Talking Points and Key Messages

If you are approached by the media regarding a reported winter weather-related fatality in your jurisdiction, the following talking points may be used. Start with message A1 or A2, then follow the instructions within that box.

A1

We were notified by the medical examiner/coroner about a fatality possibly due to winter weather conditions. Our condolences go out to the family.

Go to message B1 or B2.

A2

We have not been notified of any recent fatalities linked to winter weather conditions.

Go to message C.

B1

Out of respect for the family, we are unable to share any details.

Go to message C.

B2

On [insert date], a [gender] [“ ___ years old” or “between the ages of ___ and ___”] died during winter weather conditions.

Go to message C.

C

Hypothermia can be rapid and fatal. People should remain warm and safe by:

- a. Keeping dry, staying indoors, and wearing appropriate winter clothing.
- b. Making outdoor trips as short as possible.

Check in on family, friends, and neighbors who do not have heat, who spend much of their time alone, or who are more likely to be affected by the cold.

For more information, visit [insert relevant website].

Message mapping is one of the most important risk communication tools that public health agencies can employ. The goal of a message map is to convey important information in a concise and easy to understand fashion.



General Guidelines for Completing a Message Map

- Stick to three key messages or one key message with three parts for each underlying concern or specific question.
- Keep key messages brief. The reader should ideally spend less than 10 seconds per line.
- Develop messages that are easily understood by the target audience. (For communications with the general public, use a 6th to 8th grade readability level.)
- Place messages within a message set. The most important messages should occupy the first and last positions.
- Develop key messages that cite credible third parties.
- Use graphics and other visual aids to enhance key messages.
- Keep a positive tone. Messages should be solution-oriented and constructive. Try to balance negative messages with positive ones.
- Avoid unnecessary use of “absolute” words such as no, not, never, nothing, and none.⁵

The following is a message map that could be used when addressing the general public regarding winter weather-related safety.

Main Message

“Since [November/December/January/February], there have been ____ winter weather-related fatalities in Wisconsin. To help you and your loved ones stay safe this winter...”

Key Messages <i>Three key messages</i>	Supporting Information <i>Three pieces of supporting information for each key message</i>
Message 1 Check on your neighbors to make sure they are okay, especially the elderly and those living alone.	Supporting Info 1 The elderly are less likely to sense and respond to low temperatures. Supporting Info 2 Those living alone can be isolated and unaware of the dangers posed by winter weather. Supporting Info 3 When regularly checking with your neighbors, look for signs of cold-related illness.
Message 2 If you must be outside during a winter storm, be alert for signs of hypothermia.	Supporting Info 1 Symptoms include shivering, exhaustion, confusion, memory loss, and slurred speech. Supporting Info 2 Protect yourself by wearing several layers of loose-fitting clothes underneath a wind and water resistant outer layer. Supporting Info 3 Call 911 or seek medical attention if you or someone you know develops hypothermia.
Message 3 Warming centers and shelters are available throughout Wisconsin.	Supporting Info 1 Warming centers are designated buildings with heat where the public can seek relief from the cold. Supporting Info 2 Call 211 to find the warming center closest to you. Supporting Info 3 Text SHELTER and your zip code to 43362 to find the nearest shelter.



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