



STATE OF MARYLAND

# DHMH PRESS RELEASE

Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

201 West Preston Street • Baltimore, Maryland 21201

Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr., *Governor* • Michael S. Steele, *Lt. Governor* • S. Anthony McCann, *Secretary*

*Office of Public Relations*

*Karen Black, Director*  
410-767-6490

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Maryland Reports First Deaths Due to Cold Weather**

*Season has claimed two victims*

BALTIMORE, MD (December 5, 2006) -- The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner has determined that hypothermia was a contributing factor in the deaths of two Marylanders in November.

They include a Wicomico County man who died on November 20 and a Baltimore County man who died on November 6.

Hypothermia was a contributing factor in the deaths of 57 Marylanders during the 2005 – 2006 winter season.

The Department of Health and Mental Hygiene reminds Marylanders of the dangers associated with cold weather health hazards such as *hypothermia* and *frostbite*.

***Hypothermia*** occurs when the body temperature falls below 95°F. Nearly 600 Americans die each year from hypothermia. Symptoms may include:

- uncontrollable shivering;
- cold, pale skin;
- numbness;
- fatigue;
- poor circulation;
- disorientation;
- slurred speech; and
- bluish or puffy skin.

***Frostbite*** refers to actual freezing and subsequent destruction of body tissue which is likely to occur any time skin temperature gets much below 32°F. The areas most likely to freeze are toes, fingers, ears, cheeks and the tip of the nose.

-- more --

*Cold deaths, page two*

Persons at greatest risk for frostbite include those with impaired circulation, the elderly, the very young and anyone who remains outside for prolonged periods. The danger increases if the individual becomes wet.

Symptoms of frostbite include:

- gradual numbness;
- hardness and paleness of the affected area during exposure,
- pain and tingling or burning in affected area following warming; and
- possible change of skin color to purple.

**NEVER MASSAGE OR RUB FROSTBITTEN AREAS AS THIS MAY CAUSE FURTHER DAMAGE TO THE SKIN.**

Follow these tips to 'weather' the winter in a healthy way:

- **Cover your head.** You lose as much as 50 percent of your body heat through your head.
- **Wear several layers of lightweight, loose-fitting clothing.** The air between the layers acts as insulation to keep you warmer.
- **Cover your mouth with a scarf** to protect lungs from direct, extremely cold air. Cover your ears and lower part of your face as well.
- **Wear mittens rather than fingered gloves.** The close contact of fingers helps to keep your hands warm.
- **Wear warm leg coverings and heavy socks,** or two pairs of lightweight socks.
- **Wear waterproof boots or sturdy shoes** to keep your feet warm and dry.

###