Winter Weather

Friday, January 7, 2011
Winter weather is expected to move into the area by this weekend, so there's no better time to check in with elderly neighbors, said Caddo Parish Sheriff Steve Prator.

During extremely cold weather, the elderly have an increased risk ofhypothermia, a potentially life-threatening condition that occurs when a person's body temperature drops too low.Symptoms of hypothermia include confusion or mental disorientation, fatigue, and irregular heartbeat.Other symptoms could include shivering, slurred speech, memory loss, sleepiness, cool or pale skin, or numbness in the hands and feet.

"Winter weather is particularly hard on our senior citizens," Prator said. "If you have an elderly neighbor, especially one who lives alone or is disabled, please stay in regular contact with them. Make sure their homes are safe, and that they are ok."

The Caddo Sheriff's Elderly Victims' Assistance Office advises seniors to follow these safety precautions during the winter season:

Â·Keep your head, ears, hands, and feet warm. Wear a hat, hood or scarf, since most heat escapes through the head.

Â·Dress warmly in layers of clothing, rather than a single outerwear item, to provide better insulation from the cold.Keep clothing dry.If clothes become wet while outside, change into dry clothes as soon as possible.

Â·Remember that drinking alcohol increases the risk of hypothermia and frostbite. Anyone suspected of developing hypothermia should be brought into a warm environment and seen by a medical professional as quickly as possible.

Indoor precautions:
Â·Ensure fuel-burning equipment in the home (furnaces, hot water heaters and clothes dryers) is operating properly, ventilated and regularly inspected by a professional to avoid unintentional carbon monoxide poisoning.

Â·Electric heaters should be used with extreme caution to avoid shock, fire and burns. Â·Keep combustible material (furniture, drapes and carpeting) at least three feet from a heat source. Â·Gas ovens and burners should never be used in the home in place of central heating or portable heaters.

Use only equipment that is approved for indoor use.