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County announces shelter openings and urges caution in advance of severe cold weather conditions

A predicted drop in temperatures to below-freezing levels tonight has prompted Sarasota County Emergency Management officials to remind residents to be prepared and use caution both indoors and outside. For those needing shelter, three cold weather shelters will be opened.

“Temperatures are projected to drop rapidly below freezing overnight, particularly in inland areas,” said Sarasota County Emergency Management Chief Ed McCrane. “It is important that the community prepare for colder than usual conditions by taking precautions to protect their homes, families and pets.”

The Salvation Army and American Red Cross will staff three shelters opening at 6 p.m. today at the following locations:

North County

- Salvation Army - Center of Hope, 1400 10th St., Sarasota

South County

- St. David's Episcopal Church, 401 S. Broadway, Englewood
- Center of Hope, 1216 E. Venice Ave., Venice

The lower than normal temperatures combined with strong winds could produce dangerous wind chills. Protect plants by covering or bringing them inside. Bring pets indoors. Anyone needing to be outside overnight or during the early morning hours should dress in several warm layers and limit skin exposure to the wind.

Use caution when heating homes, as the improper use of heating devices increases the risk of fire and carbon monoxide poisoning. “Never use propane or gas heaters indoors, and be sure that electric space heaters are free from obstructions and are not located where they can be knocked over by children or pets,” said McCrane. “Never leave a lighted candle unattended, and always keep all flammable objects away from any heating devices.”

For more information contact the Sarasota County Call Center at 861.5000 or visit the All Hazards web site at www.scgov.net.

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