



STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN RESOURCES  
BUREAU FOR PUBLIC HEALTH

Commissioner's Office

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**IMPORTANT JANUARY 2016 WINTER STORM JONAS INFORMATION**

**TO: Local Health Departments**  
**FROM: Rahul Gupta, MD, MPH, FACP**  
**Commissioner and State Health Officer**  
**DATE: January 20, 2016**  
**RE: PLEASE DISTRIBUTE TO COMMUNITY PARTNERS**

The West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources, Bureau for Public Health is informing all local health departments (LHDs) of the impending Winter Storm Jonas that is described as a windy, strong, slow-moving storm that is expected to bring significant heavy snowfall to West Virginia including sleet or freezing rain. During any heavy snow storm, the potential exists for power outages. Now is the time to ensure residents know how to be prepared for the winter storm and know what to do if there is a loss of electrical power.

**Remind Residents: Carbon Monoxide is a serious public health concern during winter storms and can be deadly.**

Many residents turn to gasoline generators, gas or charcoal grills and camp stoves when winter storms lead to power outages. These appliances may be harmful or even deadly when used improperly because of carbon monoxide (CO). Never use generators and charcoal or gas grills inside your home, basements, garages, or other enclosed spaces due to the risk of CO poisoning.

CO is an odorless, colorless, poisonous gas that can cause sudden illness and death if present in sufficient concentration in the ambient air. The most common symptoms of CO poisoning are headache, dizziness, weakness, nausea, vomiting, chest pain, and altered mental status. Get fresh air immediately and call 911 if you suspect that you or a family member has CO poisoning.

CO information is available at [http://emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/co\\_guidance.asp](http://emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/co_guidance.asp).

Additional tips preparing for the storm include alerting residents to be aware of family members who are elderly and/or sick. Make sure you have adequate food, clothing, shelter, and sources of heat. Blankets can help, even in poorly heated rooms. In cold weather, wear layers of clothing and a hat, which helps keep in body heat. Indoor physical activity also raises body temperature.