



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

**Commissioner's Office**

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**IMPORTANT 2016 WINTER STORM JONAS INFORMATION**

**TO: Local Health Departments**  
**FROM: Rahul Gupta, MD, MPH, FACP**  
**Commissioner and State Health Officer**  
**DATE: January 25, 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 importance of safety messaging for your community during clean-up following Winter Storm Jonas.

**Storm clean-up precautions should be heeded to help reduce risk of injury.**

As clean-up efforts are underway across West Virginia following significant snowfall from Winter Storm Jonas, residents should be reminded to use caution during snow removal and debris clean-up. The risk of exertion brought on by shoveling large amounts of snow can cause serious health concern in addition to the potential for chain saw injury during any tree or debris removal.

Shoveling snow is hard work and can increase extra strain on the heart especially with the amount of snow that has fallen across West Virginia. If a resident has heart disease or high blood pressure, they should follow their healthcare provider's advice about shoveling snow or performing other hard work in the cold. Urge residents who are not accustomed to strenuous work activity to allow plenty of time to do the work and rest often. If clean-up includes using a chain saw, remember to follow the manufacturer's instructions to be safe. Encourage use of a hard hat, safety glasses, ear plugs, thick work gloves, chaps, and boots. Remind residents to always hold the saw at waist level or below, and make sure that others remain far away. Bent trees or branches can also be an issue, especially if they have gotten twisted, hung up on, or caught under another object. If the tree or the branch is suddenly released, it may strike the person cutting it, or a bystander. If someone is cut, put direct pressure on the wound to stop bleeding and seek medical attention as soon as possible. Call 911 if needed.

Trees entangled in power lines must be deferred to the local power company.

Questions about injury prevention or chain saw safety may be directed to the local health department or the Bureau for Public Health.