



## NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: January 13, 2009

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### **WINTER WEATHER WARNINGS**

*Rural/Metro asks the public to be prepared for the cold weather*

BUFFALO, N.Y. (January 13, 2009) – Emergency crews at Rural/Metro Medical Services are requesting the public’s assistance in maintaining accessible parking lots, driveways, and sidewalks in response to the severe cold weather and snowfall we are expecting for this week. Company officials remind resident’s to protect themselves from the cold and to use common sense when using snowblowers and snowplows.

“The predictions of severe cold weather combined with moderate to heavy snowfall give us cause for concern,” said Jay Smith, Public Affairs Manager for Rural/Metro Medical Services. “We ask that people look out for their neighbor’s and go the extra mile to clear driveways and sidewalks. The ability to deliver medical care in a timely fashion is compromised in weather like this.”

Rural/Metro Medical Services staffs many ambulances throughout Buffalo, Niagara Falls and many of the surrounding suburbs. The 9-1-1 response system requires that an ambulance be dispatched to every call regardless of medical necessity. Spikes in call volume in times of inclement weather can severely decrease the resources available to respond in a timely manner.



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“If you or someone you know has a medical emergency please don’t hesitate to call 9-1-1,” said Smith. “But we are asking the public to use discretion when calling for purposes other than immediate medical need. Rural/Metro is preparing for an increase in call volume and reminds the community that our resources are best utilized responding to true emergencies.”

In addition to keeping sidewalks, driveways and front porches clear, Rural/Metro is asking that residents take some additional measures should the need for help arise:

After calling 9-1-1:

- Please turn on an outside light to help identify your location.
- If possible have someone watch for the ambulance and be prepared to direct them to your house or apartment.
- Anything that can be done to assist the crew can save precious moments and can make a difference in a positive medical outcome.

Rural/Metro Medical Services also asks the public to take precautions when heading outside. Frostbite, localized cooling or freezing on a specific area of the body, Hypothermia, general cooling of the body causing an inability to maintain proper temperature, and Dehydration, a result of rapid fluid loss due to layers of clothing while not feeling thirsty, unfortunately increase in cold weather and storms.



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Other tips from Rural/Metro Medical Services:

- Keep driveways and sidewalks clear of snow and ice
- Keep emergency numbers nearby & flashlights handy in case the power goes out.
- Have a “buddy” check in with sick or elderly on a regular basis.
- Keep a spare house key on you at all times ... you may go outside for “a second” and get locked out of the house.
- Keep extra blankets and snacks in your vehicle in case you have a breakdown
- Keep your phone battery charged
- Dress in layered clothing as the potential for hypothermia runs rapid in colder weather.
- Drink more warm fluids without caffeine or alcohol
- Never use your hand to clear a clogged snowblower
- Never stand in front of a running snowblower
- Wear proper footgear to help you navigate potential icy and slippery conditions

“Taking additional cold weather precautions and using common sense can help keep you and your family safe and healthy during the severe weather patterns that we are prone to at this time of the year,” said Smith.

Rural/Metro Medical Services employs over 550 people and has municipal and health care facility contracts throughout Erie and Niagara County. The company is dedicated to serving the community by delivering the best in pre-hospital patient care.

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