For immediate release:

Date: February 12, 2016

## Ottawa Public Health upgrades *Frostbite Advisory* to a *Frostbite Warning*

**Ottawa –** Ottawa Public Health (OPH) has issued a ***Frostbite Warning*** overnight February 12 to ensure people take appropriate precautions before going outside and to encourage homeless people to seek indoor shelter from the cold. This frostbite warning is in effect until further notice.

A ***Frostbite Warning*** is issued when a wind chill of -35 or colder is forecast by Environment Canada for the Ottawa area. With a wind chill of -35 or colder, exposed skin can freeze in less than ten minutes. There is also an increased risk of [hypothermia](http://ottawa.ca/en/residents/public-health/healthy-living/hypothermia) for people who stay outside for long periods of time without adequate protection. Overexposure can result in severe injury and even death. OPH recommends that you wear several layers of clothing to keep warm and make sure that the outer layer protects you from wind and moisture.

[Frostbite](http://ottawa.ca/en/residents/public-health/healthy-living/frostbite) results when the skin and underlying tissues freeze. Skin is white and waxy and feels hard to the touch. Frostbite is a serious condition that can require amputation and medical attention is advised. Frostnip is a mild form of frostbite where only the skin freezes. Both frostbite and frostnip can be treated by gradually warming skin using body heat or warm water (never use hot water). Never rub or massage affected areas.

Infants, children, the elderly, people with certain chronic illnesses such as poor circulation and heart disease, and the homeless are particularly vulnerable to cold weather. Service providers to these groups including schools, daycares, emergency shelters and outdoor sporting programs should assess and adjust their programming to prevent cold injuries.

Services available to help the homeless:

1. Emergency sleeping spaces in Ottawa shelters,
2. Street outreach services to encourage homeless people to come in from the cold, and
3. Provision of emergency transportation and other services by the Salvation Army.

To seek assistance for a homeless person, concerned citizens are encouraged to call 3-1-1. Calls are answered by the City of Ottawa Call Centre on a priority basis and referrals are made to the appropriate services.

For more information on frostbite, hypothermia and cold weather precautions visit [OttawaPublicHealth.ca](http://ottawa.ca/en/residents/public-health/cold-weather-ottawa) or call 613-580-6744 (TTY: 613-580-9656).

Look for our live extreme weather updates on [Twitter](http://www.twitter.com/ottawahealth) @OttawaHealth. You can also connect with OPH on [Facebook](http://www.facebook.com/pages/Ottawa-ON/Ottawa-Public-Health/131015656935062).

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**For more information:**

Media contact

613-580-2450

Public inquiries

3-1-1