

Get ready for winter advice for older people

Age Cymru and Western Power Distribution (WPD) are teaming up to help older people in South Wales prepare for winter.



WPD's Sean Thomas (left) and Kyle Sims with Phyllis Preece and thermometer cards.

'GET ready for winter' – that's the advice today for the over 65s living in South Wales from an older people's charity and an electricity distribution company.

Age Cymru and Western Power Distribution (WPD) are teaming up to help older people in South Wales prepare for winter.

They are giving away thermometer cards that remind older people to keep their homes warm so they are less likely to become ill through cold-related conditions like flu or chest infections.

The cards also contain advice from WPD on what to do if there's a power cut.

Spread the Warmth is Age Cymru's campaign to help keep older people across Wales warm, safe and well over the winter, and this year, WPD is supporting the charity's work in this area.

Age Cymru and WPD have also put together a list of tips for older people on preparing for winter.

Age Cymru's Spread the Warmth co-ordinator Angharad Phillips said: "With winter just around the corner it's a good time to be thinking ahead and planning to keep ourselves warm, safe and well over the colder months. We have also put together a list of health tips and simple jobs that we would benefit from getting done around our homes before the temperature drops."

WPD's Network Services Manager Phil Davies explained: "We always inform our customers in advance of any planned power cuts that take place as a result of us undertaking essential maintenance or repairs to our network.

"But from time to time power cuts happen due to circumstances beyond our control, so it's important to be prepared. The thermometer cards are an ideal way of reminding older people how to prepare and also what to do during an unexpected power cut during the winter months."

'Be prepared for winter' checklist

- **Keeping your home warm:** During the winter, you need to keep your main living room around 70 degrees Fahrenheit/21 degrees Celsius and the rest of your home should be heated to at least 65 degrees Fahrenheit/ 18 degrees Celsius. Contact your local Age Cymru or visit your nearest Age Cymru retail shop for a free thermometer card.
- **Power cuts:** Check you have a phone available that will work in a power cut – digital or cordless phone may not work. Keep a charged battery/solar charger handy so that you can recharge your smart phone or tablet and follow Western Power Distribution's updates on Twitter and online power cut map. If you suffer a power cut, report it to Western Power Distribution on 0800 6783 105. Have a torch or battery operated lantern within reach.
- **Electric sockets:** Overloaded sockets can be a fire hazard. If you don't have enough sockets, use a bar adapter on a lead, rather than a block adapter. But for appliances that use a lot of power, like electric heaters or washing machine, only fit one plug in each socket.
- **Get your jabs:** If you are 65 or over, health experts recommend that you have a flu jab every year. Flu viruses change regularly and immunity wanes, so have the jab every year. Flu can increase the risk of developing. You can get a free flu jab from your GP and some local pharmacies if you are 65 and over, have a long-term health condition, or are the main carer for an older or disabled person. The 'pneumo' jab is a one-off jab that helps to protect you against pneumonia, meningitis and septicaemia. Ask your GP about it, if you are 65 or over and haven't had this.
- **Gas appliances check:** A yearly check can ensure that your appliances are working safely. Make sure that the check and any repairs are done by a Gas Safe-registered engineer. If you're a tenant, your

landlord is legally required to arrange a safety check, at least once a year, for the gas appliances they have provided. If you're an owner occupier, you may qualify for a free, annual safety check from your energy supplier, but you will have to register on their Priority Service Register. Ask your gas supplier for details.

- **Carbon monoxide detectors:** Carbon monoxide is known as 'The silent killer' because you can't see, taste or smell it. Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning can be similar to cold, flu or food-poisoning – headache, feeling sick, sore throat and dry cough. Heaters that burn gas, coal, oil or wood can give off carbon monoxide if they are not working properly. Look for a carbon monoxide detector bearing the kitemark and European Standard number BS EN 50291.
- **Trip hazards:** To avoid tripping over cords or wires, coil them up or tape them close to the wall. If you can, organise your appliances so that they are close to a socket. Loose rugs and mats can be a trip hazard and should be avoided, if possible. If you do have rugs on the floor secure them with double-sided tape or a non slip backing so that the rugs won't slip. Keep your floors clear of items such as shoes, books, blankets and other objects.
- **Lighting:** Good lighting is particularly important on the stairs. Make sure that your light bulbs are bright and look for ones that come on straight away.
- **Draught excluders:** Use draught excluders to prevent heat escaping under doors. Draught proofing windows, doors and cracks in the floor can save £20-£30 a year. But remember, when draught-proofing, it's important to leave some ventilation to reduce condensation and prevent the build-up of waste gases from fuel-burning appliances.
- **Get a benefits health check:** It's important to make sure you're not missing out on any benefits or discounts that you're entitled to receive which can help you keep your home warm – such as a Warm Home Discount on your electricity bill if you receive Pension Credit.

Contact Age Cymru Advice on 08000 223 444 for further information or visit their website:
www.agecymru.org.uk

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