

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **HEALTH OFFICIALS REMIND VIRGINIANS OF WARNING SIGNS OF HEART ATTACK DURING SNOW STORM CLEANUP**

(RICHMOND, Va.)—Stress and strenuous physical activity can increase the risk of heart attacks among those experiencing the impacts of a natural disaster. As Virginians begin the task of recovery from the recent snow storm, the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) asks those performing heavy physical activity to be aware of the warning signs of heart attacks.

While some heart attacks are sudden and intense, many heart attacks start slowly with mild pain or discomfort. If you or someone you are with begins to have chest discomfort, especially with one or more of the other signs of a heart attack, call 911 right away.

### **Warning Signs of a Heart Attack**

- **Chest discomfort**—Most heart attacks involve discomfort in the center of the chest that lasts more than a few minutes or that goes away and comes back. It can feel like uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness or pain.
- **Discomfort in other areas of the upper body**—Symptoms can include pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw or stomach.
- **Shortness of breath** may occur with or without chest discomfort.
- **Other signs** include breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea or light-headedness.

### **What To Do?**

If you or someone you are with shows one or more of these signs, don't ignore them. Call 911 to get medical help right away. Don't wait longer than a few minutes before calling for help.

Calling 911 is almost always the fastest way to get life-saving treatment. Emergency medical services (EMS) staff can begin treatment when they arrive, up to an hour sooner than if someone gets to the hospital by car. EMS personnel are also trained to revive someone whose heart has stopped. You'll also get treated faster in the hospital if you arrive by ambulance.

### **Plan Ahead**

- Learn the heart attack warning signs.
- Talk with your health care provider about your heart attack risk and what you can do to reduce it.
- Talk with family, friends and coworkers about warning signs and calling 911.

For more information about how to protect yourself and your family before, during and after natural disasters, visit [www.vdh.virginia.gov](http://www.vdh.virginia.gov) or the Virginia Department of Emergency Management's Web site at [www.readyvirginia.gov](http://www.readyvirginia.gov).