



Capital Region Braces for Cold Weather

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SARATOGA SPRINGS, N.Y. -- A longtime Saratoga resident, Vicky Belair is no stranger to the cold, but that doesn't mean she likes it.

"I never get used to it, every year gets tougher, it's tougher," Belair said. "This is a real cold one, this winter."

Despite longing for a warmer climate, Vicky and her dog Ebi still braved the elements for an afternoon stroll in Saratoga Springs Sunday, where afternoon temperatures hovered around 12 degrees.

"My dog is bothered by it," Belair said. "She doesn't want to be out in it at all but, you have to get them out, you can't sleep all day, that's what she wants to do."

Both dog and walker made sure to bundle up tight. Doctors say even brief exposure to frigid temperatures can be dangerous for us and our four legged friends.

"The cold is something that all of us have to deal with and it's important to stay out of the elements," said Dr. David Castillo, a physician with the St. Peters Hospital Department of Emergency Medicine. "We see people lose tips of their fingers, tips of their nose and ears and all of the extremities that are really exposed."

"I think the biggest misconception with animals is that because they have fur, they're somehow protected from the elements," said Windy Wyczawski, Development Director for the Schenectady SPCA. "I think it's reasonable to consider fur as being similar to human clothing and to understand that animals are susceptible to certain risks with cold weather like frost bite and hypothermia."

According to the National Weather Service, it can take as little as ten minutes to get frostbite when standing outside in 15 below zero temperatures, with only a slight five miles per hour breeze. The colder it gets, the faster it takes.

That's why, many like Belair, are braving the cold in small doses.

"Oh, I've got layers on, layers," Belair said. "I'm very warm right now, very warm, it doesn't really bother me, I don't like it, but you've got to get out and it's nice to have a dog that makes you get out in this cold weather."

Temperatures are expected to reach between 15 and 25 degrees below zero on Sunday night throughout the Capital Region.

