

# *Cold Snap in UK Causes More Deaths*

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London, February 5 (RHC)-- Official figures reveal that the death rate related to cold snaps in England and Wales is over 30% higher than normal for this time of year. According to the Office for National Statistics (ONS) some 28,800 people died in the fortnight ending January 23rd.

ONS said the flu virus and the cold snap are the main reasons behind the recent spike in winter deaths. More than 25,000 people aged over 65 lost their lives due to the cold snap. 11,102 men and 14,129 women lost their lives in the fortnight to 23 January. The death toll among the elderly was 18,154 in the same period last year.

Medical experts blame the flu- the H3N2 sub-type in particular - for most of the winter deaths. "The main type of flu that has been circulating this winter so far (influenza A/H3N2) is well recognized to particularly impact groups, such as the elderly and those with underlying chronic health problems, resulting in increases in hospitalizations and deaths. That is why we recommend these groups receive flu vaccine each year, ideally before the flu season starts," the Guardian quoted Dr Richard Pebody, PHE's head of seasonal flu surveillance, as saying.

Meanwhile, the Daily Telegraph reported that the winter death toll is expected to exceed 40,000, the highest figure for the past 15 years. Fuel poverty, particularly among the pensioners, is believed to be a contributing factor. Nearly one million senior citizens are estimated to be living in fuel poverty across the

UK.

Campaigners believe that many of the deaths can be prevented if the government improves the energy efficiency of homes across the country.

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