

COLD: Deep freeze to stick around

▼ CONTINUED FROM B1

leaves Niagara Falls for New York City at 4 a.m. Instead, the train's run will begin at Rensselaer, where it is scheduled to depart at 10 a.m.

Amtrak did resume its Lake Shore Limited service between New York City and Chicago on Monday afternoon, but warned of likely 90-minute delays in the Buffalo area where crews struggled to clear the tracks.

Trains traveling between New York City and Albany were not affected by Monday's severe weather.

Such weather, however, can be dangerous to humans. That's because the human body doesn't have many mechanisms to heat itself, said Dr. Mara McErlean, chief of emergency medicine at Albany Medical Center Hospital.

Shivering doesn't provide much heat, but it does warn you that you are cold, McErlean said. The body's best defense is getting you to change your behavior, like putting a coat on or going someplace warm.

That why alcohol and drugs can be so dangerous in the cold.

"It impairs your perception and your judgment," she said.

McErlean recommended that drivers pack a cold-weather emergency kit in the car so they have warm layers if they break down.

The elderly are particularly vulnerable to the cold. As the body ages, we become less sensitive to temperature changes, said Lucy Miller, a registered nurse for Northwoods Health Systems.

"We might feel and respond more quickly and (the elderly) are less able to do so," Miller said.

When the body's temperature drops below 96°, hypothermia sets in, she said. Signs of hypo-



PHILIP KAMRASS/TIMES UNION

CDTA patrons on South Swan Street in Albany bundle up Monday.

thermia include shivering, confusion, memory loss, exhaustion, slurred speech and numbness. If untreated, it can be deadly.

Miller recommended that the elderly avoid extended periods outdoors, dress in layers, avoid exercising outside and remove damp clothing as soon as possible. She also said the elderly should drink plenty of warm liquids, but nothing with alcohol or caffeine.

Single-digit temperatures usually yield car problems and the American Automobile Association is gearing up for a surge in service calls.

From midnight Sunday through 11:30 a.m. Monday, AAA Hudson Valley received 135 emergency road service calls, 30 percent of which were for battery-jump starts and 35 percent for tows/dead batteries, said AAA Hudson Valley spokeswoman Tammy Melo.

AAA Hudson Valley offers

these cold weather tips for maintaining your car:

■ Batteries that are 3 years old (the normal life expectancy for a car battery) or more should be checked.

■ In older cars, it's a good idea to use dry gas in every other fill up. It will reduce condensation in the gas tank and prevent gas lines from freezing.

■ Keep your gas tank at least half-full to limit condensation on tank walls. This helps to prevent rust from forming inside the tank.

■ Have your car checked by a qualified mechanic before the next cold weather snap. Go to <http://www.aaa.com> to see a list of AAA-approved repair facilities in your neighborhood.

► Staff writers Cathy Woodruff, Jennifer Patterson, Cathleen Crowley contributed to this report.