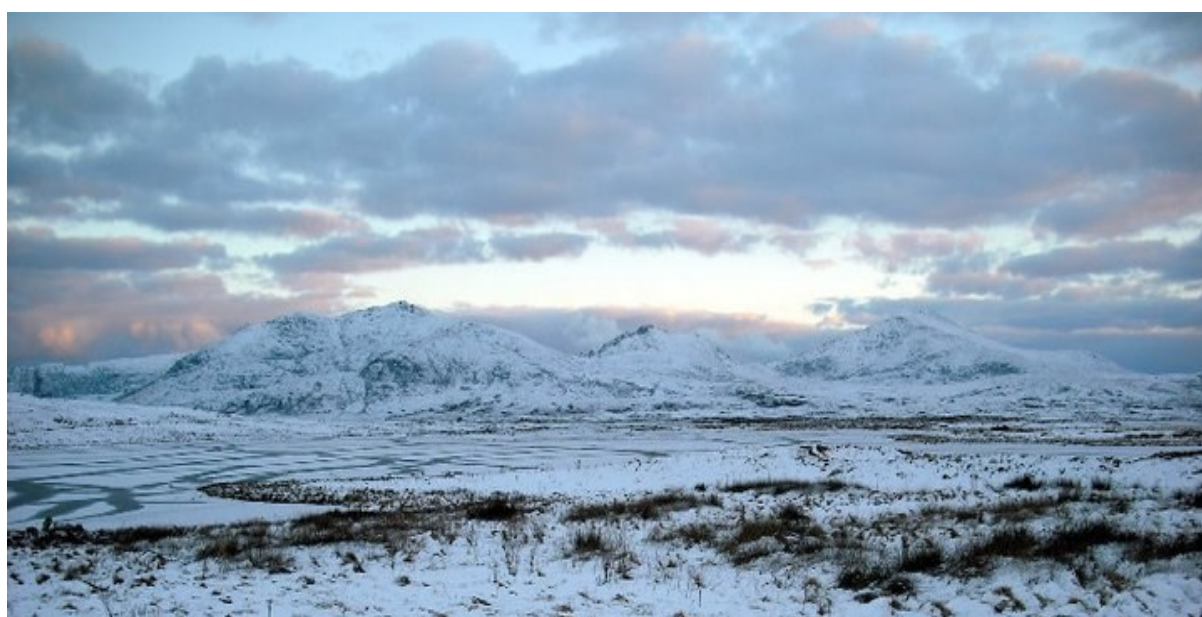


COMHAIRLE NAN EILEAN SIAR  
COMMUNITY SAFETY ADVICE FOR WINTER 2020-2021



## COMMUNITY SAFETY ADVICE FOR WINTER 2020-2021



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## Preparing for the Winter Months

Our unpredictable Hebridean winter weather can present us with many difficulties and dangers. There are however a few simple steps we can all take to ensure that we are ready for any severe weather conditions.

This booklet is designed to enable us all to make informed choices about staying safe. It is also intended to offer a level of community reassurance, by listing contact details of support networks, Islands – wide, who are at hand should anyone require assistance.

As we approach the winter months, we may take time to reflect on what has been an extremely challenging and worrying year for us all. Unfortunately, the uncertainty continues, with social distancing rules possibly preventing us from physically spending time with our friends and family this winter. There are however a number of practical things we can all do to support each other, and the wider community: for example, keeping an eye out for a vulnerable person; offering to lend them a hand with shopping or other essential tasks. We could also consider making our phone number available to someone who may need assistance.

Although we are less likely to travel great distances this winter the same personal safety rules apply when venturing out. You are advised to wear light coloured, fluorescent or high visibility clothing when out at dusk or at night. If you are wearing dark clothing, it is important to realise that a car driver may not see you, especially if there is another vehicle coming towards them. If you have to make an essential journey, consider the option of using public transport. If you do decide to travel by car, make sure your vehicle is 'Winter Ready' (please see checklist on Page 12) Allow extra time for your journey, stick to the main roads and tell someone of your planned route and anticipated return time and look at the weather forecast.

Preparation is key– taking a few simple steps now and planning ahead could make things a lot easier, and, crucially, safer for you this winter.



Roddie Mackay  
Council Leader



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## 1. Preparation

### 1.1 Essential things you may need at home:

- A list of your own emergency contact numbers
- A fully charged mobile phone
- A battery-operated torch and spare batteries (or a wind-up torch)
- Essential medicines, toiletries and a First Aid kit
- A three day 'Winter Store' including bottled water and food stuffs that won't go off
- Spare glasses or contact lenses
- Pencil, paper, a pen knife and a whistle
- A battery powered radio – tuned in to your local station
- Copies of important information, such as any medication you may currently be taking, situated beside the name of your G.P. and an emergency family/friend contact number
- A sufficient supply of your current medications to ensure that you don't run out during any period that chemists may be closed

### 1.2 Keep Warm – Keep Well

Here are some useful tips to combat the feeling of cold in your home:

- Try to maintain an even temperature of 18 - 21 degrees centigrade (65 – 70 degrees Fahrenheit) in all rooms in your home. If this is not possible, keep one room warm and use that during the cold weather.
- Use draft excluders and curtains at doors and windows, but don't block up air vents as heating appliances require fresh air in order to work correctly
- Wear as many layers of thin clothing as comfortable as opposed to a few thick ones. Natural fibres such as wool and cotton are best.
- Keep on the move– either through light chair exercise or just walking around the room. This will do wonders for your circulation as well as keeping you warm.
- Take hot food and drinks as often as you can.
- Keep your spirits up. If you find yourself stuck in the house for a few days pick up the phone and have a chat with your friends and family.
- And REMEMBER; if you feel unwell or are at all worried; seek help from your doctor, friends and neighbours.

### 1.3 Stay Active Whilst Avoiding Trips and Falls

Not all falls can be avoided but there are some simple steps that can be taken to reduce your risk. Do try to have some form of exercise each day where possible.

**Eyesight** – regular sight checks are vital. Always keep glasses clean.

**Hearing** – balance can be affected by changes in hearing. Talk to your GP if you feel this is an issue for you.

**General health** – if you're over 65, having an annual check of your health and medication is important. Some subtle changes can make a huge difference to your balance.

**Medication** – ensure you are taking your medication correctly and at the right time. See your nurse or GP if you are unsure.

**Footwear** – all footwear should be checked regularly to ensure it remains supportive and well fitting. Velcro closures are often safer than slip on shoes. Slippers which enclose the foot are safer than slippers. Ask for a referral to a podiatrist if you have difficulty finding appropriate footwear.

**Exercise** – regular appropriate exercise helps to maintain good balance and reduce the risk of falls. Contact your local sports centre or health promotion department for details of available activities, some of which have been made available remotely due to COVID restrictions.

### 1.4 Safety At Home

A well-lit, clutter free environment is a safer one:

- Tidy away any trailing cables
- Rugs need to be non-slip and free from curling edges!
- Floor coverings should be checked regularly for worn areas, especially on stairs
- Always turn a light on at night when getting up. If you feel you may be at risk, you may consider acquiring a FAIRE emergency alarm.

Also, if you are over 60 or registered disabled, Western Isles Home Safety Project, Tighean Innse Gall (TIG) offer a FREE Home Safety Survey to assess your safety needs in and around the home. If you are struggling to keep your home warm or to pay your energy bills, get in touch with TIG as they can provide tailored energy advice. You may also qualify for grant-funded draught-proofing and insulation measures, such as Internal Wall Insulation, External Wall Insulation and Room in Roof Insulation.

Contact: Tighean Innse Gall, 01851 706121 or e-mail [info@tighean.co.uk](mailto:info@tighean.co.uk) 01851 706121 Email: [info@tighean.co.uk](mailto:info@tighean.co.uk)

Also, The Highlands and Islands Fire and Rescue Service can provide free smoke alarms and home – safety checks. Call them free on: 0800 0731 999

## 1.5 Looking out for the neighbours

Think about your local community

Here are a few things you can do to help vulnerable people in your own community:

- Keep an eye out for a vulnerable person – offer to lend a helping hand with shopping or other essential tasks
- Consider the value of making your phone number available to someone you think may be in need of assistance
- If you have not seen elderly neighbours leave the house for a few days, check to see if they are alright
- If able, You could offer to clear ice or snow from a neighbours pathway
- Seek out volunteering opportunities in your area
- Get together (at all times, observing social distancing protocols) with others in your community to work out how collectively you can minimize the effects of bad weather in your area

## 2. Coronavirus Advice and Guidance

Stay safe, protect others, save lives.

You should:

- wear a face covering
- avoid crowded places
- clean hands and surfaces regularly
- stay 2m away from other people
- self-isolate and book a test if you have Covid -19 symptoms (new continuous cough, fever or loss of, or change in, sense of smell or taste)

PLEASE REFER TO THE MOST RECENT SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT COVID GUIDANCE AT THE FOLLOWING LINK:

<https://www.gov.scot/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance/>

### 3. Venturing Out: Be Safe – Be Seen

#### 3.1 Travelling on Foot.

- Wrap up well to go out, wearing a hat, scarf and gloves. A hat will stop you losing a lot of heat through your head.
- Wear light coloured, fluorescent or high visibility clothing when out at dusk or at night. If you are wearing dark clothing, it is important to realise that a car driver may not see you, especially if there is another vehicle coming towards them.
- Clothes with reflective colours are a good choice, as are reflective materials that will warn any approaching cars of your presence. You can also improve visibility with clip-on reflectors, arm bands and stickers on clothes or bags.
- If you have to go outside to collect coal or put out waste bins etc., and you don't have access to ice grippers for your shoes, a pair of socks over your shoes will increase your grip on icy footpaths.
- If you require a walking aid ensure it is well maintained. The rubber stopper (ferrule) on the end of sticks, crutches or frames should be checked regularly for wear – there should be plenty of tread left. Ensure it is not clogged with stones or other debris!
- Carry a mobile phone to ensure you can get help if required.
- Plan ahead. Hurrying can mean lower levels of concentration and less awareness of hazards. Try to take your time, especially in bad weather.
- In the event of a fall - **STAY CALM!** Get help if required. If you can't get up, try to stay warm and as comfortable as possible until help arrives.
- Following any fall, try to work out what may have caused it and make any changes necessary to reduce the risk of it happening again.

### 3.2 Travelling by Car.

#### Driving this winter?

Be prepared when you are out and about in your car! If you have to make an essential journey consider the option of using public transport. If you do decide to travel by car, allow extra time for your journey, stick to the main roads and tell someone of your planned route and anticipated return time. Check weather conditions and forecast before setting out. Take with you: food, water and a flask of hot tea, coffee or soup on longer journeys. Always keep the following items in your car:

- Torch and mobile phone – both fully charged
- An Ice scraper and de-icer
- Blanket
- Boots/Wellingtons and a warm coat
- Small spade or shovel
- Tow rope and jump leads
- A local map for unplanned diversions
- Coloured rag to tie to your aerial in the event of a snow drift
- First Aid kit

Please see Comhairle nan Eilean Siar road-gritting information at the following link:

<https://www.cne-siar.gov.uk/roads-travel-and-parking/roads-maintenance-winter-gritting/>



Is your car winter – ready?

P.O.W.E.R

P PETROL

O OIL

W WATER

E ELECTRICS

R RUBBER (TYRES AND WIPERS)

It's a useful reminder....

### 3.3 The Dangers of Hypothermia – Keep Warm Whilst out and About.

Hypothermia is a physical condition that occurs when the body's core temperature falls below a normal 98.6° F (37° C) to 95° F (35° C) or cooler. Think of hypothermia as the opposite of heat stroke. Cold water dangerously accelerates the onset and progression of hypothermia since body heat can be lost 25 times faster in cold water than in cold air. Hypothermia affects the body's core – the brain, heart, lungs, and other vital organs. Even a mild case of hypothermia diminishes a victim's physical and mental abilities, thus increasing the risk of accidents. Severe hypothermia may result in unconsciousness and possibly death.

- Wear as many layers of thin clothing as comfortable as opposed to a few thick ones Natural fibres such as wool and cotton are best.
- Maintaining a healthy diet is also extremely important in providing the necessary fuel to keep our bodies warm and healthy in the winter months.

## 4. Your General Health

### 4.1 Eating well

Many people worry about heating their home in winter, but diet is also extremely important in providing the necessary fuel to keep our bodies warm and healthy in winter months.

### Top Tips:

- Try to eat a good variety of foods, including something from each of the 5 food groups each day
- Eat regularly
- Make the effort to have at least one hot meal a day. Soup is nutritious, warming and inexpensive to make or buy as are tins of beans
- Include high fibre foods e.g. wholemeal bread, fruit, vegetables, wholegrain cereals etc. to reduce the risk of constipation
- Take hot drinks throughout the day, especially one before bedtime
- Make sure you drink enough fluid. Aim for 6-8 cups per day of a variety of fluids e.g. tea, coffee, fruit juice, water, squash etc. If you live alone it can be easy to fall into the habit of surviving on bread and butter as there is “no one to cook for”.

It is important to make food a priority and continue to eat well when cooking for one. Cooking a large meal and freezing in individual portions to reheat later helps. Another tip is to cook casseroles/one pot meals rather than cooking meat, potatoes and vegetables separately, this means that you will have less washing up to do.

It is also important to be prepared for the winter by making sure that you have a well-stocked supply of basic essentials to reduce the need to go outside in cold weather, or in case of extreme weather.

Here are some suggestions:

Freezer:

- Bread/rolls
- Vegetables
- Fruit
- Meat
- Fish

It would also be handy to have some pre-prepared frozen meals (either homemade or shop bought) stored in the freezer for days you are not feeling well or in a rush for a meal.

Cupboard:

- Vegetables tinned in water
- Fruit tinned in juice
- Dried fruit
- Long-life fruit juice
- Tinned soup
- Pasta
- Rice
- Tinned or dried potatoes
- Crackers, crispbreads, oatcakes etc.
- Cereals/porridge oats
- Eating well

UHT milk powdered milk Tinned milk puddings Tinned beans and pulses dried pulses – lentils, broth mix etc. Tinned meat e.g. ham, corned beef

Tinned fish Nuts Tea, coffee, hot chocolate etc. Vitamin D and calcium supplement

Throughout life, vitamin D is essential for keeping bones healthy. Vitamin D is found in some foods e.g. oily fish, salmon, mackerel, kippers and sardines. It is recommended that you take a vitamin D supplement which contains between 7 and 10 micrograms every day. For quick and easy recipe ideas see the 'Healthy Eating on a Budget' sheet, available from the Department of Nutrition and Dietetics at the Western Isles Hospital or online at [www.wihb.scot.nhs.uk](http://www.wihb.scot.nhs.uk). Why not ask a friend to pick one up for you.

#### 4.2 The adverse effects of alcohol

Medication and alcohol - if you take medication be aware that alcohol can seriously interfere with its effects. In particular, sedatives, tranquilisers, sleeping pills, painkillers and cold cures can be dangerous when taken with alcohol. Always check with your doctor or pharmacist before drinking alcohol if you are taking medication.

Alcohol lowers your body temperature

Alcohol has a reputation for warming us up on cold days because it makes us feel warmer when we drink it. However, this is untrue; alcohol actually leads to heat loss in the body. Thanks to that dram, we're actually getting colder, not warmer. Alcohol does nothing to warm us up and is a quick way to get hypothermia in a cold environment. Try having a warm drink, rather than an alcoholic one, to warm you up and help you sleep.

Alcohol and your health

If you have difficulty with memory, balance or co-ordination, they can become worse when you drink alcohol.

For alcohol information and support, please contact: The Lifestyle Centre and Bridge Project Uists on 01851701010 'Drinkline' on 0800 917 8282 or visit: [www.outerhebadp.co.uk](http://www.outerhebadp.co.uk)

#### 4.3 Infection control: Avoiding Winter Bugs.

Hand hygiene: washing your hands thoroughly is one of the most effective ways to avoid picking up or passing on Covid - 19 Norovirus, colds and flu.

Before delivering care, don't just do a quick wash, but take a couple of minutes to wash each finger, in between your fingers, around your nails, the palms, the wrist and back of your hands.

#### 4.4 Effective Handwashing Diagram



#### 4.5 Seasonal Influenza Immunisation Programme 2020-21 in Scotland



### Flu (Influenza)

The annual flu vaccine helps protect against the strains of flu virus that are likely to be circulating each winter flu season, which lasts from October to March.

The seasonal flu immunisation programme helps to protect the most vulnerable and alleviate pressure on the NHS. This will be more important than ever this year, in light of the Covid-19 pandemic. As well as considering those who are most at risk from the seasonal flu; for this year's vaccination programme, we must also consider who would be most at risk from concurrent infection of Covid-19 and flu. That is why eligibility is expanding for the free seasonal flu vaccine to:

- Social care workers who provide direct care,
- Household members of individuals who were shielding, and
- Those aged 55 and over (who are not already eligible)

<https://www.sehd.scot.nhs.uk/cmo/DC20200824Influenza.pdf>

Who should get the flu vaccine immunisation?

Anyone with a health condition, people aged 55 or over, pregnant women, and those who work in health care are eligible for free flu immunisation.

### What is flu?

Flu is much more than a bad cold. It's a virus which can make even healthy people feel very unwell. In the most serious cases, flu can bring on pneumonia, or other serious infections which can, in extreme cases, result in death.

Flu is often spread through the air by coughs and sneezes. It can also be caught by coming into contact with contaminated surfaces.

### **When is flu season?**

In Scotland, flu season usually begins as the weather gets colder, so get the vaccine as soon as you can. The vaccine is available from October through to the end of March.

### **How does the flu vaccine work?**

The vaccine takes around 10 days to work and should protect you from flu for around a year. You have to get immunised every year because the virus changes constantly and your immunity reduces over time. Last year's vaccine won't necessarily protect you from this year's flu viruses. The flu vaccine can't give you flu, but it can stop you catching it.

### **Is the vaccine effective?**

Over the last ten years, the flu vaccine has generally been a good match for the circulating strains of flu so you can be confident being vaccinated is the best way to help protect yourself against flu, a virus which can cause serious illness. Even when it is not as well matched, if you do develop flu and you have had the vaccine, symptoms may be less severe and you may be less likely to develop complications requiring you to see your GP or being admitted to hospital.

### **Is the vaccine safe?**

The Scottish Government has no safety concerns about the vaccines used in the seasonal flu programme. As with all medicines used in Scotland, the influenza vaccines undergo rigorous safety testing by the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA), and no concerns were reported. The MHRA continues to monitor the safety of these vaccines

### **What if I am not in one of the eligible groups?**

If you are 16 years old or over and not in one of the eligible groups for the free flu immunisation, you can get the vaccine in many high street pharmacies for a small fee. Flu, don't risk it - If you are concerned about flu-like symptoms you should contact your GP for advice or NHS 24 on 10

4.6 The importance of good mental health and where to seek help if you need it  
Whether you're looking or simply to feel more positive and energetic, there are plenty of ways to take control of your mental health.

We know that sometimes, despite trying hard to keep ourselves strong our mental health can become so low that we struggle, and some people may struggle with thoughts of suicide. If you or a friend or family member is struggling with thoughts of considering suicide, you might be afraid to bring up the subject. But talking openly about suicidal thoughts and feelings can save a life.

Do everything in your power to get a suicidal person the help he or she needs. Call a crisis line for advice. Encourage the person to see a mental health professional, or take them to a doctor's appointment. Be proactive.

If you continually experience stress, depression, or anxiety, remember that professional help exists to support you. Here is a selection of mental health helplines that could help you:

- Breathing Space 0800 83 85 87 (6pm - 2am): <https://breathingspace.scot/>
- Mind – 0300 123 3393 SANE – 0845 767 8000
- Young Minds (helpline for parents) – 0808 802 5544

## 5. Useful Contacts

5.1 Twitter Links: During bad weather, responders often issue updates live on Twitter and you don't need your own account to read them:

 <p><b>WESTERN ISLES COUNCIL</b> <a href="https://twitter.com/cne_siar">https://twitter.com/cne_siar</a></p>	 <p><b>EMERGENCY PLANNING</b> <a href="https://twitter.com/WesternIslesOEM">https://twitter.com/WesternIslesOEM</a></p>	  <b>Eileanan Siar Western Isles</b>  <b>NHS WESTERN ISLES</b> <a href="https://twitter.com/NHSWI">https://twitter.com/NHSWI</a>
 <p><b>POLICE SCOTLAND</b> <a href="https://twitter.com/WIslesPolice">https://twitter.com/WIslesPolice</a></p>	 <p><b>SCOTTISH FIRE &amp; RESCUE SERVICE</b> <a href="https://twitter.com/fire_scot">https://twitter.com/fire_scot</a></p>	  <b>NHS 24 (Call 111)</b> <a href="https://twitter.com/NHS24">https://twitter.com/NHS24</a>
 <p><b>SCOTTISH AND SOUTHERN ELECTRICITY NETWORKS</b> <a href="https://twitter.com/ssencommunity">https://twitter.com/ssencommunity</a></p>	 <b>Trusted to serve Scotland</b>  <b>SCOTTISH WATER</b> <a href="https://twitter.com/scottish_water">https://twitter.com/scottish_water</a>	 <b>Caledonian MacBrayne</b> <small>Hebridean &amp; Clyde Ferries</small>  <b>CALMAC SERVICE INFORMATION</b> <a href="https://twitter.com/CalMac_Updates">https://twitter.com/CalMac_Updates</a>



**MET OFFICE WARNINGS**

<https://twitter.com/metofficeScot>



**NHS INFORM**

<https://twitter.com/NHSinform>



**SCOTTISH POWER**

<https://twitter.com/ScottishPower>



**WESTERN ISLES WEATHER**

<https://twitter.com/IslesWeather>



**TRANSPORT SCOTLAND**

<https://twitter.com/transcotland>



**HM Coastguard**

<https://m.facebook.com/hmcoastguardwesternislesskyeandlochaber/>



**READY SCOTLAND**

<https://twitter.com/readyscotland?lang=en>



## **5.2 General Support**

FAIRE (Comhairle nan Eilean Siar Out of hours Service)	01851701 702
Age Scotland Helpline	0845 125 9732
Citizens Advice Bureaux (CAB)	01851 705727
Trading Standards	01851 822694
British Red Cross (Western Isles)	01851 702897
Samaritans	08457909090
Western Isles Advocacy	01851 701 75
Western Isles Woman's Aid	01851 704 750

### **HEALTH**

Western Isles Hospital – Stornoway	01851 704704
Uist and Barra Hospital – Benbecula	01870 603 603
St Brendan's Hospital – Barra	01871 812021
Western Isles Health Promotion Department	01851 702 712
Department of Nutrition and Dietetics - Western Isles Hospital	01851 708 279

### **HOUSING**

Hebridean Housing Partnership	0845 603 9180
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### **TRAVEL**

Stornoway Bus Station	01851 704327
Scottish Citylink Coaches	08712663 333
Calmac (Reservations)	08705 650 000
ScotRail	08457 484 950
Loganair	0344 800 2855



**Utilities:** More support and advice is available from your electricity, water and communications suppliers

National Gas Emergency Services	0800 111 999
Scottish Gas	0800 0480 202
Scottish Power	0800 0929 290
Scottish and Southern Energy	0800 300 999
Scottish Water	0845 6018 855
Home Energy Scotland Hotline	0800 512 012

### 5.3 Power Cuts - Be Prepared - Top Tips

- Having a well-stocked emergency kit at home will help until things get back to normal. This includes things like a battery operated or wind-up torch and a battery powered or wind-up radio.

- Keep mobile phones, laptops or tablets fully charged - so you will have use of battery power for a short time at least if there is a power cut.
- A non-mains powered landline telephone will help you stay in touch during any disruptions to your power supply. A cordless landline may not work because the base station needs power to operate and may not have a back-up battery.
- Have the telephone numbers you might need to hand. Download the Ready Scotland smartphone app to store all your emergency contacts in one place.
- Get your friends and family thinking ahead and learn the steps that can be taken to be prepared. Education Scotland's Ready for Emergencies website has information to help you do this.

#### Special requirements

- The utility companies work closely with local authorities to make sure that vulnerable people get the support they need during any disruptions to normal service.
- You should let your supplier know if you have a disability or are chronically sick, or you depend on a continuous supply of power for medical equipment or mobility equipment such as stair lifts and hoists.
- You should also contact your supplier if you are visually impaired or have hearing difficulties, or you are of state pensionable age, or you have other specific requirements.
- If you have elderly relatives or neighbours who might need help during a power cut, please check up on them.

**DOCUMENT ENDS**