



Winter Weather Preparedness

Have a Plan – Make a Kit – Stay Informed

Have a Plan:

- Discuss with your family what to do if a winter storm watch or warning is issued.
- Ensure your family knows meeting places and phone numbers of other family members in case they are separated when a winter storm hits.
- Know what to do if basic services such as water, gas, electricity or telephones are cut off for an extended period of time.
- Understand the hazards of wind chill. Cold temperatures are even more dangerous, and potentially deadly, when combined with strong winds. The lower the temperature and stronger the wind, the more at risk you are.
- Check on family, friends and neighbors, especially the elderly. Make sure they are prepared.
- Plan to bring pets inside during winter weather. Move livestock to sheltered areas with non-frozen drinking water.
- Install and check smoke and carbon monoxide alarms.
- Let faucets drip to avoid freezing and know how to shut off water valves if necessary.
- Have an alternate heating method such as fireplace or wood or coal burning stove. Always be cautious using a portable space heater.
- Have your car winterized before winter storm season. Keep your gas tank full for emergency use and to keep the fuel line from freezing.
- Make sure your home is properly insulated. If necessary insulate walls and attic. Caulk and weather-strip doors and windowsills.
- Install storm windows or cover windows with plastic from the inside.
- To keep pipes from freezing, wrap them in insulation or layers of old newspaper. Cover the newspaper with plastic to keep out moisture.
- Never heat a home with an oven if electricity goes out.

Make a Kit:

- Windshield scraper, de-icer, snow shovel and small broom for ice and snow removal.
- A cell phone with charger and battery powered radio.
- Several blankets or sleeping bags.
- Mittens, they are warmer than gloves because fingers generate warmth when they touch each other.
- Rain gear, warm coats and extra sets of dry clothing, mittens, socks and a cap.
- Non-perishable snacks like dried fruit, nuts and other high energy “munchies.”
- Several bottles of water. Eating snow will lower your body temperature. If necessary, melt it first.
- Sand or cat litter for generation traction under wheels and a set of tire chains or traction mats.
- Jumper cables, flashlight with extra batteries, first aid kit and brightly colored cloth to tie to antenna if you get stranded.

Stay Informed:

- Know what National Weather Service winter storm and blizzard watches and warnings mean.
- A winter storm watch is a message indicating a winter storm is possible in your area.
- A winter storm warning indicates a winter storm is occurring or will soon occur in your area and could threaten life and property.
- A winter weather advisory means winter weather conditions are expected to cause significant inconveniences and may be hazardous, especially to motorists.
- A frost/freeze warning means below freezing temperatures are expected.
- Ice storms usually bring heavy accumulations of ice that can bring down trees, electrical wires, telephone poles and lines, and communication towers. Communication and power can be disrupted for days while the utility company works to repair the extensive damage.
- A blizzard warning means sustained winds or frequent gusts to 35 mph or greater and considerable falling or blowing snow is expected to prevail for a period of three hours or longer.
- Monitor your NOAA All-Hazards Weather Radio, along with local and television stations, for weather reports.

Be Cautious with Alternative Heat Sources:

Never use generators, grills, camp stoves or other gasoline or charcoal-burning devices inside your home or garage. They produce carbon monoxide, which is an odorless, colorless and tasteless gas that kills more than 500 people every year. Use extra caution when using space heaters.

- Use fireplaces, wood stoves, or other combustion heaters only if they are properly vented.
- Do not place a space heater within 3 feet of anything that may catch fire, such as drapes, furniture, or bedding, and never cover your space heater.
- Never place a space heater on top of furniture or near water.
- Never leave children unattended near a space heater.
- Do keep a multipurpose fire extinguisher on hand in case of emergency.
- Protect yourself from carbon monoxide poisoning by installing a battery-operated carbon monoxide detector and never using generators, grill, camp stoves or similar devices indoors.

For More Information:

Winter Storms and Extreme Cold, Ready.gov: <http://www.ready.gov/winter-weather>

Winter Weather Checklists, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:
<http://emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/winter/beforestorm/supplylists.asp>

Know Your Winter Weather Terms, NOAA's National Weather Service:
<http://www.noaanews.noaa.gov/stories/s794c.htm>

