

WINTER WEATHER SAFETY

Winter weather presents many safety challenges and although staying indoors as much as possible can help reduce the risk of falls on the ice or traffic crashes, you may also face potential indoor hazards. Being prepared and following safety precautions can help you stay safe and warm through the winter season. These simple, low-cost steps that individuals and families can take to be ready include setting aside emergency supplies, making a family emergency plan and staying informed about local conditions.

The aftermath of a winter storm can have an impact on a community or region for days or weeks. Here are some tips to be ready for a winter storm or extreme cold:

- Minimize outside activities. The elderly and very young should pay particular attention to not overexert themselves while shoveling snow or doing other outdoor tasks. The strain from the cold and the hard work could cause a heart attack.
- Dress in several layers of loose-fitting, lightweight clothing, rather than a single layer of heavy clothing. Outer garments should be tightly woven and water repellent. Wear a hat, mittens and sturdy waterproof boots, protecting your extremities. Cover your mouth with a scarf to protect your lungs.
- Excessive exposure can lead to frostbite, which is damaging to body tissue that is frozen. Frostbite causes a loss of feeling and a pale appearance in extremities, such as fingers, toes, ear lobes or the tip of the nose. If symptoms are detected, seek medical help immediately.
- Hypothermia can occur in extreme cases. The warning signs are uncontrollable shivering, memory loss, disorientation, incoherence, slurred speech, drowsiness and apparent exhaustion. If the person's temperature drops below 95 degrees, seek immediate medical care.
- If you lose your heat, seal off unused rooms by stuffing towels in the cracks under the doors. At night, cover windows with extra blankets or sheets.
- Food provides the body with energy for producing its own heat. Make sure you have plenty of high-energy foods on hand. It is important to also have 1 gallon of drinking water per day for each member of your household. At least a 3-day supply of food and water is recommended.
- Consider your pets and livestock. They will need extra food and drinking water and shelter to help them stay warm as well.

Be a good neighbor. Check with elderly or relatives and friends who may need additional assistance to ensure their safety.

- Keep space heaters at least three feet from other objects and never leave space heaters unattended.
- Test all smoke and carbon monoxide alarms to make certain they are working properly.

- During a power outage, use flashlights as lighting sources.
- Avoid exertion as cold weather puts extra strain on your heart. Remember to stay hydrated as well.
- Make sure your home address is visible and take a few minutes to clear snow away from fire hydrants.
- When utilizing alternate heating sources, such as your fireplace, woodstove or space heater, take the necessary safety precautions.
- Keep a fire extinguisher handy; ensuring everyone knows how to use it properly.
- Use portable generators cautiously. Make sure they are operated only out-of-doors in a well ventilated area. Refuel a generator only after it has cooled. Do not connect your generator to your home's electrical system except through an approved transfer switch installed in compliance with the local electrical code.
 - Home caregivers should prepare a disaster supplies kit for any family member who cannot do so on their own. If this person receives home care, speak with the case manager to see what the agency's role would be in the case of emergency at home or if evacuation is indicated.

KNOW the TERMS

Freezing Rain: rain that freezes when it hits the ground, creating a coating of ice on roads, walkways, trees, and power lines.

Sleet: rain that turns to ice pellets before reaching the ground. Sleet also causes moisture on roads to freeze and become slippery.

Winter Storm Watch: a winter storm is possible in the area. Tune to NOAA Weather Radio, commercial radio, or television for more information.

Winter Storm Warning: a winter storm is occurring or will soon occur in the area.

Blizzard Warning: sustained winds or frequent gusts to 35 mile per hour or greater and considerable amounts of falling or blowing snow (reducing visibility to less than a quarter mile) are expected to prevail for a period of three hours or longer.

Frost/Freeze Warning: below freezing temperatures are expected.

TIPS FOR HAPPY MOTORING THIS WINTER

- Make sure your car is properly tuned up and in good working order and that all fluids are filled to the proper levels.
- Listen to winter weather advisories. Don't get out unless absolutely necessary during inclement weather.
- If you must travel during inclement weather, travel on main roads during the day and always allow more time for your travel due to wet, icy, or snow packed roads.
- Slow down to allow more time for travel, keep a safe distance when driving behind other vehicles and snow plows. Remember to stay clear of the plow's blind spots.
- Buckle up. Wearing a seat belt is one of the easiest safety precautions you can take.
- Have a travel agenda and let someone know the agenda, when you depart, where you are along your expected travel route, and when you have arrived at your destination.
- Keep your fuel tank as full as possible at all times.
- Keep a cell phone with a fully charged battery with you along with extra batteries and a charger.
- Have an emergency supplies kit in your car including items such as:
 - Blankets
 - Extra layers of clothing
 - First Aid Kit and Fire Extinguisher
 - Gloves, winter hats, masks, parkas, heavy socks, and boots
 - Candles with a can type base and matches (lighters don't always work in extremely cold conditions)
 - High energy foods, water, medications, and tissue paper
 - Flashlights and extra batteries
 - Shovel and ice scraper
 - Small bag of sand or kitty litter for generating traction under vehicle wheels
 - Miscellaneous tools (pliers, wrenches, screwdrivers pocket knife, tire chains, booster cables, tow ropes, gas line antifreeze
- If you become stranded, Stay with your vehicle:
 - Keep the exhaust pipe clear of snow
 - Run the engine and heater about ten minutes every hour to keep warm. When the engine is running, open an upwind window slightly for ventilation and do not go to sleep while the engine is running
 - Tie a bright red or orange cloth to the radio antenna to signal help is needed
 - Exercise to maintain body heat but avoid overexertion Exercise to maintain body heat but avoid overexertion.
 - Be careful not to waste battery power but periodically turn inside lights on at night so work crews or rescuers can see you.
 - Sound three long blasts on your vehicle's horn ten seconds apart, every 30 minutes