

**HOW TO
SURVIVE
WINTER**

**IN THE
CITY**



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How to Survive Winter in the City

The winds of change are blowing, and we need to be ready when they do. In addition to the current political climate, we also have the actual climate to deal with, and for most of us, that means dealing with winter temperatures and conditions.

Surviving a disaster in July is one thing – you may be hot, but you can reasonably take care of yourself in a manner that keeps you alive as long as you have food, water, and shelter with no extra effort. Winter, on the other hand, is an entirely different survival beast. In some climates, you can be dead within minutes if exposed to the weather without proper attire and equipment.

This month's report is all about surviving in winter when living in an urban environment. We're going to discuss:

- “Usual” disasters to expect in winter and how to deal with them
- What survival kits you need to keep on hand
- What foods you should stockpile
- What if SHTF in the winter? Here are a few survival scenarios to take into account.

The two biggest causes that I see, over and over, when somebody gets into trouble or even dies because of winter conditions are lack of knowledge and lack of preparedness. One usually goes hand in hand with the other, but there are those out here who know what to do, but don't believe anything will happen to them.

Those are the ones who really upset me because they KNEW. So, the first bit of advice that I'm going to offer is this: don't make the potentially lethal mistake of thinking that it won't happen to you.

If you knock on the pearly gates and ask to interview folks who knew but didn't prepare, they'll no doubt tell you one thing: they didn't think it would really happen.

So, learn from their mistakes.



“Usual” Disasters to Expect in Winter

This is going to depend heavily on your location. If you’re in the northern US, you’re going to see lots of snow, ice, and brutally cold temperatures. If you’re in the southern part of the US, you won’t likely see as much snow, but you may see heavy rains and low temperatures.

Along with that winter weather, there are some “usual” disasters that you should pretty much assume are likely possibilities. These aren’t considering things like WWII, so account for the big disasters separately!

Frozen Pipes

If you've lived through a northern winter in an older house, I bet you can remember at least one morning when you got up, went to turn on the water to make coffee or brush your teeth, and got nothin'.

Faucet wide open, but not a drop coming out. Congratulations – you've lived through frozen pipes.

Now, this is a situation that can range from inconvenient to financially disastrous depending upon whether they just froze, or if they froze and burst. If they just froze, you have to wait it out. A blow dryer is often helpful, but not always, depending on where it was frozen.

If they burst, look out. It's going to be expensive and messy. You're going to have to replace the pipe, plus when it defrosts, you're going to have water everywhere. Or, depending on where it froze, you may have a burst that leaks immediately.

Combat this in several ways.

- Heat tape can be purchased at any superstore or building supply store and is simply electric cable or wires wrapped in heat-resistant casing. Think of it as a heating pad for your pipes. You wrap it around your pipes, plug it in, and wake up to running water.
- Leave the cabinet doors open. This was standard practice in our house growing up. Surely, you've noticed that it's cooler inside a cabinet than it is outside of it, regardless of the temperature, assuming there's no heat source in the cabinet. Especially in old, poorly insulated houses, the cold air comes through the floor. By leaving the cabinets open, you're allowing the heat in the room easier access to the pipes in order to keep them warm.
- Put a heater in front of the cabinet. I've done this, too. On especially cold nights, we'd open the cabinets in front of the kitchen and bathroom sinks and put a little space heater in front of them. Of course, as with all things today, in lieu of

common sense, I have to add that space heaters can cause fires and harm small children or other people who don't know any better than to touch hot surfaces.

- Leave the water on just a bit to drip. Even a drip, drip, drip can help keep your pipes from freezing because it keeps water running through from the well or city line rather than just leaving it sit in the pipes to freeze. Of course, if you live in the city and have to pay for your water, this can quickly become expensive. It's also a tremendous waste of water if you just let it run down the drain, but it's better, at least now when we have plenty of water, then letting your pipes freeze and burst.

Frozen Car Doors/Locks

I can't even tell you how many times I've gone outside to get in my car and the locks were frozen, or the doors were completely frozen shut. Fortunately, this is a relatively easy fix – buy a house with a garage. Just kidding – there really are a couple of quick fixes.

There are commercial de-icers you can use, but the easiest way is to just find the door that seems the least stuck and push into it all the way down the sides and top in order to pop the ice loose. If this fails, try a hairdryer. If you just force the door open, you risk damaging the seals, so be gentle.

Same thing with the key; don't torque on it when it's obviously not working. If the lock freezes, try warming the key, then putting it into the lock because what's happened is that water's gotten down in there and frozen the mechanism together. Hand sanitizer works too as long as it's the alcohol-based type. And again, there are commercial de-icers.

To prevent your doors from freezing shut, spray your door seals with Pam (or the generic equivalent) cooking spray. Many people suggest using WD40, and I've done it myself, both inside a lock and on my door seals, but be warned that it's naturally tacky and, though it will definitely displace the water (that's what the WD stands for), it will

leave a buildup on your seals and inside your locks that you may have to clean up later. That being said, I use it and it works.

Blizzards

If you've ever been through a good blizzard (or a bad one, depending upon your take on blizzards), then you know that they're deathtraps if you're not careful.

Just a few concerns that accompany blizzards are:

- Collapsed roofs
- Downed powerlines
- Decreased or no visibility during the storm.
- Extreme wind
- Downed trees that can prevent you from leaving the house
- Deep snowdrifts



Your best bet when you know that a blizzard is coming is to get ready to hunker down. This means:

- Have your food, water, and meds stockpiled
- Have plenty of wood ready in a location close enough to the house that you don't have to go far to get it
- Have a rope tied from the house to necessary points that you may need to get to outside, such as to the barn or the emergency vehicles
- Have candles and other non-electrical sources of light handy
- Have a back-up heat source because there's a good chance that you'll lose power in the storm

- Have plenty of blankets ready
- Be prepared to section off the part of the house that's near the heat source to conserve heat. You can do that by hanging blankets or garbage bags in the doorways and stairways that don't have doors.
- Have your vehicle packed and ready to go in case of emergency
- Have the chains on your vehicle
- Gas the car up before the storm, but don't be one of those gas hogs who fills every single solo cup in your house with gas. Unless you're evacuating, which you should do BEFORE the storm, you only need a few days' worth of gas at the most.
- Have plenty of flashlights with fresh batteries
- Charge your cellphones, tablets, and laptops
- Have a fully stocked medical kit, which we'll discuss below
- Non-electric forms of entertainment – coloring books, cards, board games, etc.
- Extra blankets and warm, dry clothes
- Air mattress(es) to sleep on in the warm room

That pretty much covers the basics, though it's impossible to predict everything you'll need in a storm.

Road Ice

It's impossible to avoid unless you don't ever leave the house. At some point in the winter, you're going to drive on ice. I can't overemphasize the value of tire chains and caution.

Between the two, you have a pretty good chance of getting where you're going if you absolutely must drive.

If you begin to skid on ice, steer into the skid rather than away from it in order to help you regain control.



Don't hit the breaks – tap them instead. Leave plenty of room between you and the car in front of you and pay extra close attention to your surroundings.

If kids or dogs run out in front of you, your stopping time is going to be much slower than on a dry road.

And for heaven's sake, don't drive your cell phone. I have no doubt that whomever you're texting with would much rather you ignore them than die answering a text about picking up milk or who Bobby took to the dance last night. Other people on the road will appreciate you not going out of your way to harm them or their family and friends, too.

Every time you look down to read or answer a text, you're literally weaponizing a 2000-pound-plus vehicle. Stop it.

Power Outages

Losing power in winter can quickly become a critical situation, and the weight of snow on lines frequently causes it. You need to be prepared regardless of whether you live in an apartment or in a farmhouse in the country. You're going to need two things: at least one source of heat to keep you warm and one to heat up food/water. Lights are nice, too.

I recommend keeping some kind of space heater that doesn't require electricity, such as a camp heater that runs on oil or propane.

Fireplaces are great too, if you have one. Best of all would be a wood-burning stove, if you're in a place where you can have one.

The list for what you need for power outages is similar to the one needed for a blizzard because they're pretty similar, and because power often goes out during a blizzard.





Winter Survival Kits

As with all survival scenarios, the equipment and supplies that you have may very well determine your fate. So, let's start with that. You should have at least four different types of survival kits for winter, and for each vehicle or location you have, you should have at least one of each kit in it.

Remember that what goes into your kit is going to rely heavily on your location, the emergency that you're preparing for, and whether or not you're bugging out or staying in.

So, as with all things survival, use your common sense when deciding what to put in each of your kits. If you're in Florida or Arizona, tire chains probably aren't something you need to worry about. But if you're in Maine, you betcha you had better have them!

Winter Survival Car Kit



My friends always make fun of the “junk in my trunk,” and I’m not talking about the extra 15 pounds I’ve packed on since high school.

I have several survival items in my trunk, though all but a couple of them are in a duffel bag.

I have a couple of days of water and food (though technically its’ beef jerky and granola bars, but still. It’d get me through if I needed to.

In addition to my year-round survival stuff like my paracord bracelets and farro stick, my winter kit

for when I drive up to see the folks in snowville also has:

- Wax fire starters because they work well even on wet or frozen wood
- Wooden matches
- An extra flashlight
- Four solar blankets
- An extra change of warm, dry clothes, including another coat and a few pairs of socks and shoes
- Hand warmers
- Extra water, because when you’re cold, you actually use more fuel
- A camp shovel
- A sleeping bag
- A bag of kitty litter in case I get hung up for traction
- Plastic grocery bags and a couple of large garbage bags
- Jumper cables
- Fire extinguisher

This seems like a lot but when you actually picture the size of all of it, nearly all of it fits in a duffel bag.

Blackout Kit

Many people don't get that the purpose of a blackout kit isn't the same as a bugout bag. A bugout bag is going to have food, water, maybe maps, a source of heat, a medical kit, etc. A blackout kit is made to do one thing – be your go-to bag in the first several minutes of a power outage.

As such, it's a much lighter kit that can be tucked away just about anywhere. Primary items found in a winter blackout kit will include:

- A flashlight with extra batteries
- A hand-held radio
- A solar blanket for each member of your house
- A lighter, matches, or other means to light a fire
- 9-hour candles
- Hand warmers
- A multi-tool
- Knife and screwdriver if not on the multitool (though why wouldn't it be?)
- Glow sticks or a chem-light
- Emergency contact numbers
- Hand warmers

That's it. Your blackout bag should weigh more than a couple of pounds and should be easy to carry so that you can access it and use it in a hurry.

You can add a few things to meet your immediate power-outage needs based on location and personal needs.

Medical Kit

This is the third and final “specialty” kit that you should have with you regardless of whether it’s in your house or your car.

I carry a pared-down med kit in my backpack when I’m on the bike, too. It’s just common sense to.



Basically, when you’re putting together your winter medical kit, you’re going to want to have the basics – bandages, antibiotic ointment, alcohol pads – but that’s not all. A winter med kit needs to have winter-specific items.

- Space blankets can quite seriously save your life. They’re lightweight and take up practically no room so have a few extra because they have many different uses in addition to keeping you warm.
- Hand warmers – these aren’t just nice, they can save your fingers, toes, or nose from frostbite. Anything that sticks off your body – fingers, toes, ears, nose – are all more susceptible to frostbite than major body parts, so keeping those parts warm is critical, that is, if you want to keep those parts! Even if you’re losing body temperature, you can put hand warmers under your armpits, under your hat, and in your shoes to help you maintain.
- Hot water bottles for the same reason, except they’re good when you’re stationary.
- Extra matches to start fires to prevent frostbite.
- Plastic bags to keep feet and hands warm and dry.

Your Food Stockpile

What to Stockpile for Winter

So, is there a difference in the food that you should stockpile in the winter? Well, sort of. There are a couple different factors to consider when you think of winter stockpiling vs summer stockpiling.

For one thing, if you're in temperatures that are consistently below freezing so that your meat will stay frozen outside, you can stockpile more meat as a protein source because, unlike in summer, you don't have to worry about it spoiling if the power goes out.

For another, your body is going to need quite a bit of fuel to stay warm if you're in a situation where you're not as warm as you're used to being. In other words, if your power goes out and you're sleeping in a sleeping bag in your living room because you only have a small space heater, you're probably going to need more calories than usual to stay warm. That doesn't necessarily affect **WHAT** you store so much as it impacts how **MUCH** of it you should store.

For proteins, **meats** are easy to can or you can make jerky. A combination of both is best, in the interest of having both portable foods and different flavors.

- Venison
- Oily fish
- Beef Jerky
- Chicken
- Turkey
- Sausage
- Beef
- Peanut butter or nut butter
- Nuts, especially walnuts

- Canned tuna
- Dried beans
- Brown Rice – when mixed with black beans or pinto beans, you have a complete protein.
- Protein bars

For fats, stockpile coconut oil – unlike most fats, coconut oil is a medium-chain triglyceride which means that your body processes it faster; much like it does carbs but without the insulin spike. A great oil to stock for diabetics! Also add some olive oil, and butter. Remember to add some **condiments** and **spices** to your stash!

If you're a person who lives mostly off of your rooftop garden or your container garden most of the summer and fall, then you're going to have to switch things up and add some muscle to your stockpile because you won't be able to supplement with all of that fresh food. In that case, add some **canned veggies** and **fruits** to your stockpile to supplement.



This list is just a guide to the most nutritious vegetables available. If you don't like something, or have a veggie that you love but don't see on the list, feel free to add it to your stockpile.

- Beets
- Sweet potatoes
- Green Beans
- Spinach
- Greens, such as collard and dandelion
- Peppers, both bell and hot offer a wide array of nutrients
- Tomatoes, whole and juice

- Okra
- Asparagus
- Brussels Sprouts
- Apples. You can store them fresh just like you do potatoes but be sure you have a cellar to do this or they'll quickly rot. You're better off canning them into apples, applesauce, apple pie filling, apple butter etc.
- Orange juice. You need the vitamin C to keep you from getting rickets.
- Pineapples and juice – see above
- Cherries
- All berries – cranberries, blueberries, strawberries, blackberries and raspberries
- Peaches
- Raisins
- Mangoes
- Pears
- Pomegranates
- Prunes – nutritious and also valuable to help keep your bowels regular. A double whammy here – nutrition and medicinal uses.

You may also want to stock back an extra case of **water** because your body sometimes needs more in the winter than even in the summer because of certain metabolic processes. And it's never a bad thing to have plenty of water.

Do make sure that you stockpile foods rich in vitamin C because they aren't as common fresh in winter. A few good examples are strawberries, broccoli, orange juice, and grapefruit juice.

Other non-food items that you may want to consider stockpiling are **essentials** such as vitamins, paper plates, napkins, baking goods, craft supplies, and anything else that will keep you from needing to leave the house. Unlike in a hurricane or other summer emergency, winter storms can keep you inside for days on end and if you don't have anything with which to wash dishes, that can get messy quickly.

The same thing goes for boredom, either yours or the kids. Remember, if you have little ones, school will likely be out for the duration, so, sans TV or video games, you'll want to have something to entertain them with!

How to Keep Your Stockpile Safe During Winter

Here are five common threats that winter can bring. So you can adequately prepare, you'll also find tips on how to avoid these threats. That way you can make it through the cold season with your supply stores intact.

1. Threats from Extreme Cold

Have you ever put a can of pop in the freeze to cool off and forgotten about it? I did once in high-school, and it's not a fun mess to clean up!

When liquids freeze, they expand. This can lead to containers breaking, loss of supplies, and a mess. Similarly, canned goods can bulge when frozen, breaking the seal. Water stored improperly can freeze and burst.

Additionally, any items you've stockpiled with a high liquid content can suffer changes in texture and may separate into different layers. This includes things like:

- Toothpaste
- Hand soap
- Shampoo
- Shaving cream
- Paint
- Chemicals
- Foods with a lot of liquid like: condiments, evaporated milk, canned soup

To prevent damage and loss from extremely cold weather, make sure your supplies aren't in an unheated area. If you must keep them where it's cold, like in a garage or other outbuilding, take precautionary steps.

Run a small heater to keep the temperature above the freezing point. Or, add an extra layer of insulation to the area. You can even use straw bales to create a barrier around your stockpiles.

2. Threats from Flooding

Are your stockpiles in a room with water pipes running through? If your pipes freeze, they're going to get soaked. Water can ruin many supplies quickly. Mold is also a concern where there's water damage. You definitely don't want mold to get into your stockpiles.

To avoid any damage, ensure your pipes are ready for freezing weather. Insulate them. Run heat in the room. Keep some water flowing at night. Patch any leaks before the dripping water freezes and causes problems. If you need a short-term solution, use plastic bottles to help.

You can also move your stores into containers that are more waterproof. For instance, large plastic totes can hold a lot, and will keep most of the moisture out if a pipe bursts.

Water pipes bursting aren't the only threat water threat to your supplies. Check your storage areas. Be aware of other sources of water such as leaky cement walls, condensation and runoff from the thaw.

3. Threats from Pests

Do you know what the insects, mice, and other pests do when it gets cold outside? They typically try to find someplace warm to stay before winter sets in. That could be inside your home, outbuildings, or garage.

Stinkbugs and mice are more common to see indoors in the winter where I live. They start trying to get indoors in late fall, typically before the first snow. You might have different critters in your region.

No matter what pests are trying to get inside, you need to make sure your stockpiles are protected. Because it's not fun to find a mouse nest inside your emergency go bag.



Or mouse droppings on top of your food stores. Those rodents can gnaw through so many things! You must store your stockpile properly to avoid spoilage.

Your stockpile should be pest proof year-round, but now is the perfect time to double check. Make sure the lids are tight on your containers. Ensure they are rodent and insect proof.

You might consider setting out traps for mice or other rodents as a prevention measure. Here is how to make a simple mouse trap. If flying

insects are a problem, hang up some fly strips to help eliminate them. That way you can stop the problem before it escalates.

After all, these emergency stores are for you and your family. Not to keep pests alive all winter long.

4. Threats from Loss of Service

Blackouts happen no matter where you live, especially in the winter. Entire cities have been left in the dark after damage to the grid caused by high winds. Damage from an EMP would be even more severe.

You must be prepared for loss of service. It's a definite threat to your reserves.

Freezers Going Out

Are you relying on freezers to store most of your long-term food stores that you've prepared? In a power outage, your freezer won't maintain the right temperature for more than a few days.

A generator can help, and so can the great outdoors if your temperatures are below freezing. But you must have a plan in place to know where to move everything when the

time comes. A longer-term solution would be to move your stores to the pantry through canning or dehydration. Canned goods are shelf-stable and aren't threatened by loss of power, if they don't freeze.

Water Freezing

When there's no power, there's no way to pump water. If you live in the city, you might not always lose your water for a short power outage, but those out in the country will. Regardless, you need water on hand.

Water freezes when the temperature drops. But, you'll still need liquid drinking water each day, along with enough water to take care of hygiene and everything else.

If you have a woodstove with a cooktop, you can melt your stored ice until it turns back into a liquid. But, that adds time and energy exertion to your day. Keep at least a few days' worth of water stored in your house where it won't freeze. That'll give you a few days to figure out your long-term plan. If you have animals, remember you'll also need a way to keep them hydrated for the duration of the outage.

Heat Source

What's your backup plan for heat? When services go out, you'll need to make sure you and your stockpiles don't freeze. Ice buildup can cause problems even with your backup energy, so be sure to think through a winter plan.

Light

Will you be able to find what you need in your stores if you're working in the dark? You don't want to knock over and break something while you're pawing around.

To prepare, make sure you have a couple of flashlights or oil lanterns easily accessible. Along with those should be batteries or the fuel you need. Check on these a few times throughout winter and ensure everything is in good working order. Then when the power goes out, you'll know exactly where to go for light. You'll be able to see your reserves clearly and avoid damaging anything.

5. Threats from Thieves

Not everyone believes in the necessity of building a stockpile. When times get tough, like they can over a long, hard winter, those unprepared people can quickly run out of needed items. If they know that you have plenty, or can see your supplies while driving by, you're at bigger risk for thievery.

Thievery isn't only limited to harsh weather, so take time now to secure your stores and make them harder to access. Here are some tips for keeping possession of your goods:

Build your woodpile out of sight of the main road, along with any other items stored outdoors.

Learn how to make your stores blend in naturally to their surroundings, hiding them in plain sight.

Hide your valuables in unusual locations instead of places thieves commonly look

Don't tell your neighbors or anyone details about your stockpile. Stay silent.

Stay under the radar when the power goes out. Don't flash your powerful generator, your ability to prepare food, or anything else.

You don't want everything you worked hard to prepare to be snatched. It can happen when you least expect it.



What if SHTF During Winter

It's easy to say what you'd do if SHTF in a major way in the middle of summer, but what if it happens when there's a foot of snow on the ground and it's 15 degrees outside? That changes things considerably, doesn't it? It does, indeed, and yet there's no way to predict when bad things are going to happen, so you need to be prepared for all eventualities.

Now, there are several things to consider, just as there always is.

First, are you going to bug out or hunker down? In most cases in the winter, it's better to hunker down because you're already in a place with food, water, and ways to stay warm. Even if you have no heat in your home, you still have a roof over your head and windows and walls to keep the wind and rain out.

If, however, you can't stay in your home, what should you do? Well, this is something you need to plan before it becomes an issue.

Bugging out in the middle of winter has significantly more risks than heading out in the middle of summer. There are all sorts of stories of people who were stuck broken down beside the road and froze to death because they ran out of fuel. It's the little things that get you.

So, if you're in the city, it's a safe bet that if SHTF, the shelters are going to be full, as are the hospitals. There may or may not be gas stations with fuel – another reason to make your decision well in advance. Take it from somebody who's lived through 16 hurricane seasons – the time to decide to leave is days in advance, not hours. It's easy to be wishy-washy and want to wait to see what happens but the problem is that's what everybody else is doing, too.

Then what happens is the roads turn into parking lots, gridlocked with traffic caused by people who wanted to see what would happen before they decided to leave. Trust me – an extra night in a hotel or an extra day off work is way better than dealing with that mess!

If you think you may leave, then make arrangements to see Aunt Nellie and Uncle George a few days in advance. Of course with hurricanes, we usually get a week or so's notices, so that makes it easier to plan for.

Now, what sorts of SHTF scenarios should you be thinking about?

What if something happens and the public transportation becomes inoperable. "But," you say, "I own a car. This doesn't affect me." Oh, yes it does. If you're used to driving to work and all of a sudden, the folks who use the buses and subways are forced to travel by other methods, too.

They're going to be borrowing cars and asking others for rides, but most importantly, maybe, is that there's now more traffic and more demand for fuel, so those are definitely two factors that you'll need to consider before writing that off as a non-issue for you. If

the public transportation systems go down, your life suddenly becomes much more difficult because you're now sharing the road with thousands of other people. A recipe for crime and madness.

Prepare for this as you usually do, but planning ahead is always for the best.

City Water Supply is Compromised

This is a particularly tough one because you're also dealing with traffic and fighting people like mad to get to the grocery store and get milk and whatever else it is before Armageddon, aka, a snowstorm, falls.

The problem here is that you have no choice. You **HAVE** to have water; it's not optional. If it's going to be several days before the water's safe to drink again, consider going to stay at a friend's or relatives where it **IS** safe. If it's not safe to drink, it's not safe to bathe it, either. I know that's not the commonly accepted thing, but your skin's an organ. If there's something that's too toxic to put in my mouth, I'm not putting it on my skin.

Of course, that's your choice, though.

The lesson here, as always, is to have plenty of water stockpiled to begin with so that you don't have to worry about fighting the crowds if this does happen.

A Few Suggestions

If you get stuck outside in a survival situation in the summer, you'll likely survive as long as you can find food and water. Not so in the winter. I know that we've talked mostly about city survival, but these rules apply to anywhere.

It's imperative that the first thing you do if SHTF during the winter is make sure that you have solid shelter and a source of heat that will keep you from freezing to death. Be aware that this is going to be everybody else's goal too, so if it gets really bad, you want to stay out of sight.

After you have shelter, then it's time to make sure that you have the other two keys that are critical to your survival: water and food. Hopefully you've managed to stockpile enough and are able to just hunker down in your home and wait it out, but if not, have a backup plan. Then have a backup plan for your backup plan.

Contingencies are always a good thing when you're trying to manage something as fickle as the weather!

Check your supplies, especially the ones in your car, every week or so to make sure that they're still dry, unfrozen, and in good shape. Nothing would suck more than pulling out the one clean, dry change of clothes you think you have, only to find out that they've had a quart of oil leak all over them. Keep track of that!

Surviving winter is a different animal than surviving other times of the year, but if you manage it properly and plan it well, things can most certainly turn out just fine!

Just be prepared – it's all you can do!