



Winter storms can bring freezing temperatures, large quantities of snow and ice, high winds and blizzard conditions. As a result, hazards to you and your family's health are possible. Preparing before the storm can help you protect your family.

Before a Winter Storm: Prepare Your Family

- **Stay informed.**
 - Monitor for severe winter weather in your area at the NOAA National Weather Service. <http://www.weather.gov/>
- **Know the terminology.**
 - **Winter Storm Watch:** Severe winter conditions, such a heavy snow and/or ice, are possible for your area in the next 12 to 36 hours. Prepare now!
 - **Winter Storm Warning:** Severe winter conditions are expected in the next 12-24 hours; 4-6 inches of snow or sleet, or 1/4 inch or more of ice is expected. Seek shelter immediately!
 - **Blizzard Warning:** Snow and strong winds (gusts up to 35 mph or greater) will combine to produce a blinding snow (near zero visibility), deep drifts, and life threatening wind chill; expected to occur for three hours or longer.
- **Prepare an emergency kit.**
 - Food, water and necessities for all members of the family to last 3 to 5 days; high energy food (e.g., dried fruit) or canned food that require no cooking or refrigeration is best
 - Any medications needed for family members
 - First aid kit, battery powered radio, flashlight with extra batteries
 - Sleeping bags or blankets
 - Extra clothing and boots, hats, mittens
 - Fire extinguisher
 - Emergency contact numbers
- **Family communication plan.**
 - Inquire about emergency plans at places where your family spends time: work, daycare and school.
 - Have a plan of how you will contact each other if you are in separate locations or establish a location to meet.
 - Have an out-of-state relative or friend serve as the family contact person.
 - Learn the location of the emergency shelters for your area.

Before a Winter Storm: Prepare Your Vehicle

- **Prepare your car for winter.**
 - Have your car systems serviced; check the battery, antifreeze, wipers, etc.
 - Replace wiper fluid with a wintertime mixture.
 - Replace worn tires; check the air pressure in the tires.
 - Keep the gas tank full to avoid ice in the tank or fuel lines.
- **Prepare a survival kit for your car that includes:**
 - Blankets/sleeping bags
 - Extra winter clothes (mittens, hats, scarves), boots
 - High calorie, non-perishable food (e.g., unsalted nuts, dried fruit); hard candy can help keep your mouth moist
 - A can and waterproof matches to melt snow for drinking water
 - Flashlight, extra batteries, battery powered radio, first aid kit
 - Shovel, windshield scraper
 - Road salt, sand or cat litter
 - Cell phone and charger
 - Jumper cables, tow rope, tool kit
 - Compass and road maps

During a Winter Storm

- **Stay informed.**
 - Listen to local news and weather channels for situation developments and road closures.
- **Stay inside.**
 - Avoid traveling during the storm period.
 - This can help you avoid injuries from cold temperatures, slips on the ice or car accidents.
- **Gather your emergency supplies.**
 - Be prepared for power outages or conditions requiring you to remain at home for several days.
- **Stay safe while indoors.**
 - Use fireplace, wood stoves, or other combustion heaters only if they are properly vented to the outside.
 - Use battery-powered flashlights or lanterns.
 - Avoid using candles; if they are used never leave them unattended while lit.
 - If you lose power or heat to your home and do not have back-up heat options, go to a designated public shelter.
- **Stay nourished.**
 - Eat to provide your body with energy to produce its own heat.
 - Keep your body replenished with fluids to prevent dehydration.

- **Cooking safety.**

- Never use charcoal grills or portable gas camp stove indoors —the fumes can be deadly.

- **If you have to go outside,**

- Dress warmly and in layers; loose-fitting, lightweight, warm clothing is best.
- Wear a hat; most body heat is lost through the top of the head.
- Cover your mouth with a scarf to protect your lungs from cold temperatures.
- Stay dry to avoid frostbite and hypothermia.
- Avoid ice. Many cold-weather injuries result from falls on ice-covered sidewalks, steps, driveways, and porches.
- Avoid exertion. Cold weather puts an extra strain on the heart. If you have heart disease or high blood pressure, follow your doctor's advice about shoveling snow or performing other hard work in the cold.

- **If you are caught outside during a storm,**

- Try to find a shelter out of the wind.
- Stay dry and cover all exposed parts of your body.

- **If you must travel,**

- Do so during daylight.
- Don't travel alone.
- Stay on main roads.
- Tell others about your route and schedule.

- **If you get stranded in your vehicle,**

- Stay calm! Staying in your vehicle is often the safest choice.
- Turn on your hazard lights.
- Make yourself visible to rescuers:
 - Tie a distress flag (preferably red) to your antenna or window.
 - Turn on the dome light at night, but only when running the engine. You don't want to wear down your battery.
- Run the motor/heater for only about 10 minutes per hour.
 - Open a window slightly to let fresh air in.
 - Make sure snow is not blocking the exhaust pipe to avoid potential carbon monoxide poisoning.
- As you sit, keep moving your arms and legs to improve your circulation and stay warmer.
- Drink fluids to remain hydrated.
- Do not leave your car unless you know exactly where you are, how far it is to possible help, and you are certain this action will improve your situation.
- Do not let all occupants of the car sleep at once; one person should always remain awake.

After a Winter Storm

- **Check on neighbors to see if they need help.**

- **Clear away the snow safely.**

- Wear sturdy shoes or boots, layered clothing, hat and gloves.
- Do not overexert yourself. Shoveling causes many heart attacks, especially in very cold temperatures.
- Pace yourself, work slowly, and rest frequently.
- Take your time and lift small amounts.
- Lift snow/shovel properly to avoid back injuries.
- Make sure you have good footing when lifting the snow shovel.

- **Use caution with gas powered equipment.**

- Dangerous carbon monoxide can be generated by gas-powered equipment as well as alternative heating sources.
- Use these items only in well ventilated areas.
- **Signs:** dizziness • light-headedness • nausea

- **Once the blizzard is over, you may need to leave your vehicle and proceed on foot.**

- Follow the road if possible.
- If you need to walk across open country, use distant points as landmarks to help maintain your sense of direction.

Cold-Related Illnesses

- **If any of these conditions are suspected, SEEK MEDICAL CARE IMMEDIATELY!**

- **Frostbite.**

- Can occur following prolonged exposure to low temperatures, wind or moisture.
- **Signs:** white, waxy or pale appearance to extremities (e.g., fingers, toes, nose, ear lobes); skin is cold and numb

- **Hypothermia.**

- Occurs when the core body temperature drops to a level at which normal muscle and brain functions are impaired.
- **Signs:** extreme shivering • confusion or disorientation • memory loss • slurred speech • drowsiness • exhaustion
- If you can't get help quickly, warm the person's body **SLOWLY** and start with the body core first, **NOT** the extremities.
- Do not give the person any alcohol, coffee or any HOT beverage or food. Warm broth or food is better.

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