



## WINTER STORM SAFETY TIPS

Make sure you and your family are prepared for winter emergencies. By starting ahead of time, your preparations will have you safe and comfortable in almost any winter situation!

### Assemble a home disaster kit for winter emergencies:

- First aid kit and essential medications, including for those with special needs, such as babies, the elderly, and the disabled.
- Battery-powered NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) Weather radio, flashlight, and extra batteries.
- Canned food and can opener. High energy food, such as dried fruit or candy, and food requiring no cooking or refrigeration is best. And don't forget the pets!
- Bottled water (at least one gallon of water per person per day to last at least 3 days), as well as an adequate supply for pets.
- Extra warm clothing, including boots, mittens, and a hat, and extra blankets.
- Heating fuel. Fuel carriers may not reach you for days after a severe winter storm.
- Emergency heating source, such as a fireplace, wood stove, space heater, etc. -Learn to use properly to prevent a fire, make sure you have proper ventilation.

### If a winter storm warning is issued:

- Stay indoors.
- If you must go outside, several layers of lightweight clothing will keep you warmer than a single heavy coat. Gloves (or mittens) and a hat will prevent loss of body heat. Cover your mouth to protect your lungs.
- Understand the hazards of wind chill, which combines the cooling effect of wind and cold temperatures on exposed skin.
- As the wind increases, heat is carried away from a person's body at an accelerated rate, driving down the body temperature.
- After the storm, if you shovel snow, be extremely careful. It is physically strenuous work, so take frequent breaks. Avoid overexertion.

### Assemble an emergency kit for your car/truck:

- Blankets/sleeping bags
- Flashlight with extra batteries
- First-aid kit
- High-calorie, non-perishable food; a small can and water-proof matches to melt snow for drinking water
- Extra clothing to keep dry and warm
- A large empty can and plastic cover with tissues and paper towels for sanitary purposes
- Windshield scraper and brush; bag of sand (or cat litter); shovel
- Tool kit
- Tow rope, booster cables
- Compass and road maps
- Keep your gas tank near full to avoid ice in the tank and fuel lines.



**If you get stuck in your car:**

- Stay with your car. Do not try to walk to safety.
- Tie a brightly colored cloth (preferably red) to the antenna for rescuers to see.
- Start your car and run it for about 10 minutes per hour, then shut it off. This will allow you to run the heater as well as ensuring that it will still start. The last thing you want to do is run out of gas, so keep a close eye on the needle. Keep the exhaust pipe clear so fumes won't back up in the car.
- Leave the overhead light on when the engine is running so that you can be seen.
- As you sit, keep moving your arms and legs to keep blood circulating and to stay warm.
- Keep one window away from the blowing wind slightly open to let in air.

**Winter precipitation definitions to know:**

- Flurries - Light snow falling for short durations. No accumulation or light dusting is all that is expected.
- Showers - Snow falling at varying intensities for brief periods of time. Some accumulation is possible.
- Squalls - Brief, intense snow showers accompanied by strong, gusty winds. Accumulation may be significant. Snow squalls are best known in the Great Lakes region.
- Blowing snow - Wind-driven snow that reduces visibility and causes significant drifting. Blowing snow may be snow that is falling and/or loose snow on the ground picked up by the wind.
- Blizzard - Winds over 35 mph with snow and blowing snow reducing visibility to near zero.
- Sleet - Rain drops that freeze into ice pellets before reaching the ground. Sleet usually bounces when hitting a surface and does not stick to objects. However, it can accumulate like snow and cause a hazard to motorists.
- Freezing rain - Rain that falls onto a surface with a temperature below freezing. This causes it to freeze to surfaces, such as trees, cars, and roads, forming a coating or glaze of ice. Even small accumulations of ice can cause a significant hazard.



**Dangers to be aware of in cold weather:**

*Frostbite*

Frostbite is damage to body tissue caused by that tissue being frozen. Frostbite causes a loss of feeling and a white or pale appearance in extremities, such as fingers, toes, ear lobes, or the tip of the nose. If symptoms are detected, get medical help immediately! If you must wait for help, slowly rewarm affected areas. However, if the person is also showing signs of hypothermia, warm the body core before the extremities.

*Hypothermia (Low body temperature)*

Warning signs - Uncontrollable shivering, memory loss, disorientation, incoherence, slurred speech, drowsiness, and apparent exhaustion. Detection - Take the person's temperature. If it is below 95 degrees F, immediately seek medical attention. If medical care is not available, begin warming the person slowly. Warm the body core first. Get the person into dry clothing, and wrap them in a warm blanket covering the head and neck. Do not give the person alcohol, coffee, drugs or any hot beverage or food; warm broth is better. Do not warm extremities (arms and legs) first! This drives the cold blood toward the heart and can lead to heart failure.

*Wind chill*

The wind chill is based on the rate of heat loss from exposed skin caused by combined effects of wind and cold. As the wind increases, heat is carried away from the body at an accelerated rate, driving down the body temperature. Animals are also affected by wind chill.