

Winter Storm Preparedness and Recovery



Before Winter Storms and Extreme Cold

- Make a Family Communications Plan. Your family may not be together when disaster strikes, so it is important to know how you will contact one another, how you will get back together and what you will do in case of an emergency.
- A NOAA Weather Radio broadcasts alerts and warnings directly from the NWS for all hazards.
- Sign up in advance to receive notifications from your local emergency services.
- Minimize travel. If travel is necessary, keep a disaster supplies kit in your vehicle.
- Bring pets/companion animals inside during winter weather.

Prepare an emergency kit with the following supplies:

- Rock salt or more environmentally safe products to melt ice on walkways.
- Sand to improve traction.
- Snow shovels and other snow removal equipment.
- Sufficient heating fuel. You may become isolated in your home and regular fuel sources may be cut off. Store a good supply of dry, seasoned wood for your fireplace or wood-burning stove.
- Adequate clothing and blankets to keep you warm.

During Winter Storms and Extreme Cold

- Stay indoors during the storm.
- Walk carefully on snowy, icy, walkways.
- Avoid overexertion when shoveling snow. Use caution, take breaks, push the snow instead of lifting it when possible, and lift lighter loads.
- Keep dry. Change wet clothing frequently to prevent a loss of body heat. Wet clothing loses all of its insulating value and transmits heat rapidly.
- Keep alert for signs of frostbite.

Be aware of the signs of hypothermia:

- Dangerously low body temperature
- Uncontrollable shivering
- Memory loss
- Disorientation
- Incoherence
- Slurred speech
- Drowsiness
- Apparent exhaustion

- Drive only if it is absolutely necessary. If you must drive: travel in the day; don't travel alone; keep others informed of your schedule; stay on main roads and avoid back road shortcuts.
- Let someone know your destination, your route, and when you expect to arrive. If your car gets stuck along the way, help can be sent along your predetermined route.
- If the pipes freeze, remove any insulation or layers of newspapers and wrap pipes in rags. Completely open all faucets and pour hot water over the pipes, starting where they were most exposed to the cold (or where the cold was most likely to penetrate).
- Maintain ventilation when using kerosene heaters to avoid build-up of toxic fumes. Refuel kerosene heaters outside and keep them at least three feet from flammable objects.
- Conserve fuel, if necessary, by keeping your residence cooler than normal. Temporarily close off heat to some rooms.
- If you will be going away during cold weather, leave the heat on in your home, set to a temperature no lower than 55°F.



After Winter Storms and Extreme Cold

- If your house loses power or heat for more than a few hours or if you do not have adequate supplies to stay warm in your home overnight, you may want to go to a designated public shelter if you can get there safely. Text SHELTER + your ZIP code to 43362 (4FEMA) to find the nearest shelter in your area (e.g., SHELTER20472).
- Bring any personal items that you would need to spend the night (such as toiletries, medicines). Take precautions when traveling to the shelter. Dress warmly in layers, wear boots, mittens, and a hat.
- Continue to protect yourself from frostbite and hypothermia by wearing warm, loose-fitting, lightweight clothing in several layers. Stay indoors, if possible.

Learn from Every Storm

Restock your emergency supplies to be ready in case another storm hits.

Assess how well your supplies and family plan worked. What could you have done better?

Take a few minutes to improve your family plan and supplies before the next winter storm hits.

Talk to your neighbors and colleagues about their experiences and share tips with each other.