



WINTER STORMS & EXTREME COLD

the local scoop

Los Alamos County receives **REGULAR SNOWFALL** between October and April—usually about 53 inches. **WINTER STORMS** occur when precipitation and freezing temperatures mix to produce a significant accumulation of snow or ice; they are often worsened by wind that produces blowing and drifting snow and reduced visibility. **EXTREME COLD** often accompanies or follows a winter storm.

Winter storms occur **COUNTYWIDE** and involve heavy rains, snow, ice, and high winds that cause downed trees and power lines, power outages, accidents, and road closures. Pipes might freeze and burst in homes that are poorly insulated or without heat. Prolonged exposure to extreme cold can cause frostbite or hypothermia in humans and can become life-threatening, especially to infants and the elderly.

LIKELIHOOD OF FUTURE OCCURRENCES: High. Winter storms with snow and freezing temperatures are frequent and occur annually in Los Alamos County.

BEFORE:

- Restock your **EMERGENCY KIT** to include rock salt (to melt ice on walkways), sand (to improve traction), snow shovels, sufficient heating fuel such as firewood (in case fuel sources are cut off), flashlights, batteries, warm clothes and blankets, and high-energy food and water.
- Make a **FAMILY COMMUNICATION PLAN** in case your family is not together when the storm occurs. Decide how you will contact one another and how you will get back together.
- Sign up in advance to receive **CODE-RED EMERGENCY NOTIFICATIONS** (<http://public.coderedweb.com/CNE/BFB7CC4C6C0A>).
- **MINIMIZE TRAVEL.** If travel is necessary, keep emergency and first-aid kits in your vehicle.
- Bring **ANIMALS INSIDE** during winter weather. Move livestock to sheltered areas with non-frozen drinking water.
- **WINTERIZE YOUR HOME** by insulating walls and attics, caulking and weather-stripping doors and windows, and installing storm windows or covering windows with plastic.
- Clear rain gutters; **REPAIR ROOF LEAKS** and cut away tree branches that could fall on a house or other structure during a storm.
- **MAINTAIN CHIMNEYS** and heating equipment by having them cleaned and inspected every year.
- **INSULATE PIPES** with insulation or newspapers and plastic and allow faucets to drip a little during cold weather to avoid freezing. If a pipe does burst, know how to shut off water valves.
- Check the **STRUCTURAL ABILITY OF THE ROOF** to sustain heavy weight from accumulation of snow (or water, if drains on flat roofs do not work).
- If you will be out of town during cold weather, **LEAVE THE HEAT ON** in your home—no lower than 55 degrees.

DURING:

- Stay **INDOORS** during the storm.
- **WALK CAREFULLY** on snowy, icy, walkways.
- Avoid overexertion when shoveling snow. **OVEREXERTION** can bring on a heart attack—a major cause of death in the winter. 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.
- Beware of **FROSTBITE**, which occurs when the skin and body tissue freeze (and a loss of feeling and color results in the extremities). Cover exposed skin, but do not rub the affected area in an attempt to warm it up. Seek medical help immediately.
- Beware of **HYPOTHERMIA**—aka dangerously low body temperature that results in uncontrollable shivering, memory loss, disorientation, incoherence, slurred speech, drowsiness, and exhaustion. If body temperature drops below 95 degrees, seek medical attention. Get the victim to a warm location. Remove wet clothing. Warm the center of the body by wrapping the person in blankets or dry clothing. If the victim is conscious, administer warm, non-alcoholic beverages.

- **DRIVE** only if it is absolutely necessary. If you must drive: travel during daylight; 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 **PIPES FREEZE**, remove any insulation or layers of newspapers and wrap pipes in rags. Open all faucets and pour hot water over the pipes, starting where they were most exposed to the cold.
- Conserve **FUEL**, if necessary, by keeping your residence cooler than normal. Temporarily close off heat to some rooms.

AFTER:

- If your home 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.
- Continue to protect yourself from frostbite and hypothermia by wearing warm, loose-fitting, lightweight clothing in several layers. **STAY INDOORS**, if possible.
- Restock your **EMERGENCY SUPPLIES** and reevaluate your family plan to be ready in case another storm hits.

