

# Winter is Here! Be Prepared!

## KEEP AHEAD OF THE STORM

Although periods of extreme cold cannot always be predicted far in advance, weather forecasts can sometimes provide you with several days' notice. Listen to weather forecasts regularly, and check your emergency supplies whenever a period of extreme cold is predicted.

Your ability to feel a change in temperature decreases with age, and older people are more susceptible to health problems caused by cold. If you are over 65 years old, place an easy-to-read thermometer in an indoor location where you will see it frequently, and check the temperature of your home often during the winter months.



## TAKE ACTION

If you plan to use a fireplace or wood stove for emergency heating, have **your chimney or flue inspected each year**. Ask your local fire department to recommend an inspector, or find one in the yellow pages of your telephone directory under "chimney cleaning." Also, if you'll be using a fireplace, wood stove, or kerosene heater, install a smoke detector and a battery-operated carbon monoxide detector near the area to be heated. Test them monthly, and replace batteries twice yearly.

**If you have pets, bring them indoors.** If you cannot bring them inside, provide adequate shelter to keep them warm and make sure that they have access to unfrozen water

### Prepare a winter storm kit with these supplies:

- Rock salt to melt ice on walkways
- Sand to improve traction
- Snow shovels and other snow removal equipment

Prepare for possible isolation in your home by having sufficient heating fuel; regular fuel sources may be cut off. For example, store a good supply of dry, seasoned wood for your fireplace or wood-burning stove in or near your home where you can easily (and safely) reach it in snowy conditions.

Winterize your home to extend the life of your fuel supply by insulating walls and attics, caulking and weather-stripping doors and windows, and installing storm windows or covering windows with plastic. Insulate any water lines that run along exterior walls so your water supply will be less likely to freeze.

During a major snow storm, your primary concerns are the potential loss of heat, power, telephone service, and a shortage of supplies if storm conditions continue for more than a day. Have available:

- Flashlight and extra batteries.
- Battery-powered NOAA Weather Radio and portable radio to receive emergency information. These may be your only links to the outside.
- Extra food and water. High energy food, such as dried fruit or candy, and food requiring no cooking or refrigeration is best.
- Extra medicine and baby items.
- First-aid supplies.
- 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.
  - Have proper ventilation.
- Fire extinguisher and smoke detector.
  - Test units regularly to ensure they are working properly.

## KEEP YOUR WATER SUPPLY...

Extreme cold can cause water pipes in your home to freeze and sometimes rupture. When very cold temperatures are expected:

- Leave all water taps slightly open so they drip continuously
- Keep the indoor temperature warm (at least 62 degrees)
- Improve the circulation of heated air near pipes. For example, open kitchen cabinet doors beneath the kitchen sink

If your pipes do freeze, do not thaw them with a torch. Instead, thaw them slowly by directing the warm air from an electric hair dryer onto the pipes. If you cannot thaw your pipes, or the pipes are ruptured:

- Use bottled water or get water from a neighbor's home
- As an emergency measure—if no other water is available—snow can be melted for water. Bringing water to a rolling boil for one minute will kill most microorganisms or parasites that may be present, but won't remove chemical pollutants sometimes found in snow

## DON'T FORGET TO PREPARE YOUR VEHICLE, TOO...

To winterize your vehicles – check the following:

- Battery and ignition system should be in top condition and battery terminals clean.
- Ensure antifreeze levels are sufficient to avoid freezing.
- Ensure the heater and defroster work properly.
- Check and repair windshield wiper equipment; ensure proper washer fluid level.
- Ensure the thermostat works properly.
- Check lights and flashing hazard lights for serviceability.
- Check for leaks and crimped pipes in the exhaust system; repair or replace as necessary. Carbon monoxide is deadly and usually gives no warning.
- Check breaks for wear and fluid levels.
- Check oil for level and weight. Heavier oils congeal more at low temperatures and do not lubricate as well.
- Consider snow tires, snow tires with studs, or chains.
- Replace fuel and air filters. Keep water out of the system by using additives and maintaining a full tank of gas.

## PLAN YOUR TRAVEL...

It's best not to travel when road conditions are hazardous or may become dangerous. If you must travel, check the latest weather reports and take action to avoid the storm, as well as:

- Fully check and winterize your vehicle before the winter season begins.
- Carry a WINTER STORM SURVIVAL KIT:
  - blankets/sleeping bags;
  - flashlight with extra batteries;
  - first-aid kit;
  - knife;
  - high-calorie, non-perishable food;
  - extra clothing to keep dry;
  - a large empty can and plastic cover with tissues and paper towels for sanitary purposes;
  - a smaller can and water-proof matches to melt snow for drinking water;
  - sack of sand (or cat litter);
  - shovel;
  - windshield scraper and brush;
  - tool kit;
  - tow rope;
  - booster cables;
  - water container;
  - compass and road maps.
- Keep your gas tank near full to avoid ice in the tank and fuel lines
- Try not to travel alone or at night
- Let someone know your timetable and primary and alternate routes

