

WINTER PREPAREDNESS

Prepare your home and family

Ahead of the season:

- Winterize your home by insulating walls and attics, caulking and weather-stripping doors and windows. Install storm windows or cover windows with plastic.
- Winterize barns, sheds, or any other structure that could provide shelter for your family, neighbors, livestock or equipment.
- Secure an alternate fuel source such as firewood or a generator. Or both. That means to have a two-week supply of dry, seasoned wood for your fireplace or wood-burning stove or a two-week supply of pellets for your pellet stove and a battery to power its fans.
- Learn how to shut off water valves (in case a pipe bursts).
- Know ahead of time what you should do to help elderly or disabled friends, neighbors or employees.
- Clear rain gutters; repair roof leaks and cut away tree branches that could fall on a house or other structure during a storm.
- Insulate pipes and allow faucets to drip a little during cold weather to avoid freezing.
- Keep fire extinguishers on hand, and make sure everyone in your house knows how to use them.
- Check the structural ability of the roof to sustain unusually heavy weight from the accumulation of snow - or water, if drains on flat roofs do not work.

Now:

- Prepare for possible isolation in your home by having sufficient heating fuel (regular fuel sources may be cut off).
- Stock some sand by the front door.
- Check snow shovels and other snow removal equipment.

Prepare your car

- Check antifreeze protection
- Check the battery, charging, and ignition system; make sure battery terminals are clean
- Check the exhaust system: Carbon monoxide is deadly, invisible, and odor free; check for leaks and crimped pipes.
- Replace fuel and air filters
- Keep water out of the system by using additives and maintaining a full tank of gas. The higher the ethanol level in your gasoline the more water it will attract.
- Check heater and defroster operation.
- Check lights and flashing hazard light operation.
- Check the oil.
- Check the thermostat.
- Replace windshield wiper blade inserts and fill the washer fluid tank.
- Switch to your winter tires.

(Maintain at least a half tank of gas during the winter season.)

Place a winter emergency kit in each car

- battery powered radio
- blanket(s)
- boots
- booster cables
- emergency flares
- extra batteries
- extra hats, socks and mittens
- first aid kit with pocket knife
- flashlight
- fluorescent distress flag or triangles
- kindling for a fire
- matches
- necessary medications
- road salt and sand
- shovel
- small pan to melt snow
- snack food
- tow chain or rope
- water (it doesn't matter if it freezes)
- windshield scraper and small broom

Dress for the Weather

- Wear a hat.
- Cover your mouth with a scarf to protect your lungs.
- Wear several layers of loose fitting, lightweight, warm clothing rather than one layer of heavy clothing. The outer garments should be tightly woven and water repellent.
- Wear mittens, which are warmer than gloves.

Practice Outside Safety

- Avoid overexertion so take breaks when shoveling heavy snow, pushing a car, or walking in deep snow. Sweating could lead to chill and hypothermia.
- Cold weather also puts extra strain on the heart, so the elderly and those with heart conditions should be especially cautious when out in the cold.
- Walk carefully on snowy, icy sidewalks.
- Wear loose-fitting, lightweight warm clothing in layers, with a waterproof outer layer.
- Wear wool hat and mittens.
- Keep your clothes dry. Change wet socks and clothing quickly to prevent loss of body heat.
- Understand the hazards of wind chill. As wind speed increases, heat is carried away from a person's body more rapidly.

If Stranded Outside

- Try to stay dry and cover all exposed parts of the body.
- Prepare a windbreak or snow cave for protection from the wind.
- Build a fire for heat and to attract attention.
- Do not eat snow. It will lower your body temperature. Melt it first over your fire.

File a "Float Plan"

- Tell someone where you are going and when you expect to return every time you leave the house.

Richard B. Harper, 2011

