

# WINTER STORM

The extreme cold and heavy snowfall that accompany winter storms can be debilitating and dangerous. Winter storms can affect everyone, even those who usually experience mild winters. Heavy snowfall can be blinding for drivers and dangerous for those it traps indoors. Winter storms may also include high winds, sleet, freezing rain, frozen roads, power outages and dangerously cold temperatures.



## *How to Prepare for a Winter Storm*

- Be aware of the risk for severe winter weather in your area.
- Stay informed and know winter storm terminology:
  - **Freezing rain**—Rain that freezes when it hits the ground. Ice may coat roads, walkways, trees and power lines.
  - **Sleet**—Rain that freezes into ice pellets before it reaches the ground. Sleet can cause moisture on roads and walkways to freeze.
  - **Winter storm watch**—Weather conditions are favorable for development of a winter storm. Stay tuned to radio or TV for more information and instructions.
  - **Winter storm warning**—A winter storm is occurring or will occur soon.
  - **Blizzard warning**—Considerable amounts of snow with sustained winds or frequent gusts up to 35 mph are expected to prevail for at least three hours. Visibility is reduced to less than a quarter mile.
  - **Frost/freeze warning**—Below-freezing temperatures are expected.
- Make sure your home is properly insulated.
- Caulk and weather strip doors and windows to keep out cold air.
- Insulate pipes to prevent freezing.
- Consider what to use for emergency heat in case the electricity goes out:
  - Fireplace with ample supply of wood
  - Small, well-vented camp stove with fuel
  - Portable space or kerosene heater (check with your fire department first)
- Understand the heating system in your home. Be aware that the most destructive home fires happen during winter weather due to improper use of heating devices.
- To prevent water damage from burst pipes, keep your home's temperature above freezing, even if you are away.
- Keep your car's gas tank full to keep the fuel line from freezing and for emergency use.
- Make sure you have an adequate amount of winter clothing and blankets for your family.
- Get an emergency supply kit that includes rock salt, sand, snow shovels and other snow-removal equipment, adequate winter clothing and batteries for radio and flashlights.
- To slow the accumulation of snow and ice on your driveway and outside steps, pretreat these surfaces by spreading a small amount of rock salt.



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## ***What to Do If There Is a Winter Storm***

- Stay inside and monitor the radio or TV for more information or instructions.
- Eat regularly and drink plenty of fluids.
- Practice fire safety, check the batteries in your smoke alarms and make sure there is plenty of ventilation if you are using a heat source that can produce hazardous smoke or fumes.
- Dress in several layers of warm clothing.
- If you are outside:
  - Do not overexert yourself in snow shoveling or any other physical activity.
  - When shoveling, do not try to move large amounts of snow each time. Lift with your legs to help prevent serious back injury.
  - Cover your mouth to protect your lungs from the extremely cold air.
  - Keep dry and change any wet clothing as soon as possible.
- Watch for signs of frostbite: loss of feeling or pale appearance in extremities.
- Travel only if you must, during the day and on main roads.
- If you are trapped in your car by a blizzard:
  - Pull to the side of the road and put the hazard lights on.
  - Remain in the vehicle, where rescuers are most likely to find you.
  - Run the engine for 10 minutes every hour to keep warm.
  - Exercise to maintain body heat, but do not overexert yourself.
  - Drink fluids to avoid dehydration.
  - At night, take turns sleeping and turn the inside light on.
  - Be careful not to waste battery power.
  - If you are stranded in a remote area, stomp large block letters in an open area that spell “HELP” or “SOS.”
  - Leave the car on foot only if absolutely necessary and the blizzard has passed.
- Watch for signs of hypothermia: uncontrollable shivering, memory loss, disorientation, slurred speech and drowsiness.
- If signs of hypothermia are detected, keep victims warm by removing all wet clothing, warm the center of their bodies first and seek medical attention immediately.

## ***What to Do After a Winter Storm***

- Stay tuned to radio or TV for more information or instructions.
- Be aware of the possibility of flooding after a winter storm.
- Seek medical attention immediately if needed.
- Be very careful driving, as roads may still be wet or frozen.
- Once you are in a safe place, report to your command if you are military or government civilian personnel or a member of the selective reserves.

## ***Where to Find Additional Information***

- Ready Army—[www.ready.army.mil](http://www.ready.army.mil)
- American Red Cross—[www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)—[www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/winter/](http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/winter/)
- Department of Homeland Security (Ready.gov)—  
[www.ready.gov/america/beinformed/winter.html](http://www.ready.gov/america/beinformed/winter.html)
- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)—[www.fema.gov/hazard/winter/index.shtm](http://www.fema.gov/hazard/winter/index.shtm)

**It's up to you. Prepare strong. Get an emergency supply kit with enough supplies for at least three days, make an emergency plan with your family and be informed about what might happen.**

