

What are YOU gonna do about...

WINTER STORMS & EXTREME COLD?

Winter storms can last for many days and include high winds, freezing rain, sleet or hail, heavy snowfall and extreme cold. These types of winter storms can shut down a city or area mainly due to blocked roads and downed power lines. People can be stranded in their car or trapped at home for hours or days, but there are many other hazards that come with these storms.

The leading cause of death during winter storms is automobile or other transportation accidents and the second leading cause of death is heart attacks. Hypothermia (or freezing to death) is very common with the elderly who sometimes die inside their homes because it is so cold. The best way to protect yourself from a winter disaster is to plan ahead before the cold weather begins. Take advantage of spring sales when winter items are cheaper so you're ready for next winter.

BEFORE A WINTER STORM:

Prepare - Review FLOOD, POWER LOSS, WIND and WINTER STORM MITIGATION at beginning of this Section.

Learn the buzzwords - Learn terms / words used with winter conditions...

- **Freezing rain** - rain that freezes when it hits the ground, creating a coating of ice on roads and walkways
- **Hail** - rain that turns to ice while suspended and tossed in the air from violent updrafts in a thunderstorm
- **Sleet** - rain that turns to ice pellets before reaching ground
- **Winter Weather Advisory** - cold, ice and snow expected
- **Winter Storm Watch** - severe winter weather such as heavy snow or ice is possible within a day or two
- **Winter Storm Warning** - severe winter conditions have begun or are about to begin
- **Blizzard Warning** - heavy snow and strong winds producing blinding snow (near zero visibility) and life-threatening wind chills for 3 hours or longer
- **Frost/Freeze Warning** - below freezing temperatures expected

Be prepared - Review Section 1 to develop a **Family Emergency Plan** and **Disaster Supplies Kit**, and add the following at home for winter storms:

- **calcium chloride** - good for melting ice on walkways (rock salt can blister concrete and kill plants)
- **sand or kitty litter** - to improve traction
- **emergency heating equipment and fuel** - have backup...
fireplace - gas or wood burning stove or fireplace
generator – gas or diesel models available and learn how to use it in advance (and never bring it indoors!)
kerosene heaters – ask Fire Department if they are legal in your community and ask about safety tips in storing fuel
charcoal - **NEVER** use charcoal indoors since fumes are deadly in contained room -- fine for outdoor use!!
- **extra wood** - keep a good supply in a dry area
- **extra blankets** – either regular blankets or emergency blankets (about the size of a wallet)

Clean chimney - If you use a wood-burning fireplace often, have it inspected annually and consider having a professional chimney sweep clean it as needed. Learn more in the Chimney Safety Institute of America's FAQs at www.csia.org

DURING A WINTER STORM:

Listen - Get updates from radio and TV weather reports.

What to wear - Dress for the season...

- **layer** - much better to wear several layers of loose-fitting, light-weight, warm clothing than one layer of heavy clothing (outside garment should be waterproof)
- **mittens** - mittens are warmer than gloves
- **hat** - most body heat is lost through the top of your head
- **scarf** - cover your mouth with a scarf or wrap to protect your lungs from cold air

Don't overdo it - Be careful when shoveling snow or working outside since cold can put strain on the heart and cause a heart attack (even in children!)

Carbon monoxide - Learn how to protect your home from winter heating dangers by visiting CDC's Carbon Monoxide site at www.cdc.gov/co/

Watch for signs - playing or working out in the snow can cause exposure so look for signs of...

- **frostbite** - loss of feeling in your fingers, toes, nose or ear lobes or they turn really pale

- **hypothermia** - start shivering a lot, slow speech, stumbling, or feel very tired

If signs of either one ... get inside quickly and get medical help (*see COLD-RELATED ILLNESSES in Section 3*). Also check out NOAA's Windchill Chart and safety data at www.nws.noaa.gov/om/winter/windchill.shtml

Power loss – If the power goes off, turn off all tools, appliances and electronic equipment to reduce the load on electrical system once power is restored. It also may protect devices from a power surge that could follow the start-up. (Tip: Leave one light switch on so you know power's back on.)

Leaving? – If you decide to leave home during the winter for some time with the chance of freezing weather hitting while your gone, Canadian officials suggest you ...

- Turn off main breaker or electric switch.
- Turn off water main where it enters house and cover the valve and pump or meter with a blanket or insulating material.
- Drain the water from the plumbing system by turning on water taps and flushing toilets a few times. Add some anti-freeze to toilet bowl, sink and bath drains.
- Check draining and frost protection instructions in the manuals for your dishwasher, washing machine, etc.

WINTER DRIVING TIPS

Driving - If you must travel, consider public transportation. Best to travel during the day, don't travel alone, and tell someone where you're going. Stay on main roads and avoid taking back roads.

Winterize car - Make sure you have plenty of antifreeze and snow tires (or chains or cables). Keep gas tank as full as possible during cold weather.

Winter Kit - Carry a "winter" car kit in trunk (*see Section 1*) and throw in...

- **warm things** – mittens, hat, emergency blanket, sweater, waterproof jacket or coat
- **cold weather items** - windshield scraper, road salt, sand
- **emergency items** - bright colored cloth or distress flag, booster cables, emergency flares, tow chain, rope, shovel
- **miscellaneous** - food, water, radio, etc.

Stranded - If you get trapped in your car by a blizzard or break down...

- **get off the road** - if you can, drive car onto shoulder

- **give a sign** - turn on hazard lights and tie a bright cloth or distress flag on antenna, door handle or hang out driver side window (keep above snow so it draws attention)
- **stay in car** - stay inside until help arrives (CAR KIT can provide food, water and comforts if you planned ahead)
- **start your car** - turn on car's engine and heater about 10 minutes each hour (open window slightly for ventilation so you don't get carbon monoxide poisoning)
- **light at night** - turn on inside light so crews or rescuers can see you
- **if you walk** - if you walk away from car, make sure you can see building or shelter (no more than 100 yards/10 m)
- **exercise** - DO NOT overdo it, but light exercises can help keep you warm
- **sleeping** - if others in car, take turns sleeping so someone can watch for rescue crews
- **exhaust pipe** - check exhaust pipe now and then and clear out any snow buildup

AFTER A WINTER STORM:

Check food - If you lost power, check food in both fridge and freezer to ensure it didn't spoil. Foods in a well-filled, well-insulated freezer won't go bad until several days after power goes off. If there are ice crystals in the center of food it's okay to eat or refreeze.

Don't overdo it - Both adults and children need to be careful when playing or working outside in frigid conditions since cold can put strain on the heart and cause a heart attack.

Restock - Stock up on items you used so you're ready for the next one.

Recovery tips - Review TIPS ON RECOVERING FROM A DISASTER starting on next page.