

FACT SHEET

WINTER STORMS

A major winter storm can be lethal. Preparing for cold weather conditions and responding to them effectively can reduce the dangers caused by winter storms.

Be familiar with the winter storm warnings messages.
(See *Winter Storm Warnings*)

Service snow removal equipment and have rock salt on hand to melt ice on walkways and kitty litter to generate temporary traction.

Make sure you have sufficient heating fuel; regular fuel sources may be cut off.

Winterize your home.

- Insulate walls and attic.
- Caulk and weather-strip doors and windows.
- Install storm windows or cover windows with plastic from inside.

Have safe emergency heating equipment available.

- Fire place with ample supply of wood.
- Small, well vented wood, coal or camp stove with fuel.
- Portable space heaters or kerosene heaters (see *Kerosene Heaters*)

Install and check smoke detectors.

Keep pipes from freezing.

- Wrap pipes in insulation or layers of old newspapers.
- Cover the newspapers with plastic to keep out moisture.
- Let faucets drip a little to avoid freezing.
- Know how to shut off water valves.

Have winter emergency supplies on hand.

- Flashlight and extra batteries.
- Portable battery-operated radio and extra batteries.
- First aid kit
- One-week supply of food (include items that do not require refrigeration or cooking in case the power is shut off)
- Portable can opener
- On-week supply of essential prescription medications
- Extra blankets and sleeping bags.
- Fire extinguisher (A-B-C type)

Winter Storm Warnings

A *winter storm watch* indicates that severe winter weather may affect your area. A *winter storm warning* indicates that severe winter weather conditions are definitely on the way.

A *blizzard warning* means that large amounts of falling or blowing snow and sustained winds of at least 35 miles per hour are expected for several hours. A *traveler's advisory* is issued if travel is expected to be difficult.

Kerosene Heaters

Check with your local fire department on the legality of using kerosene heaters in your community. Use only the correct fuel for your unit and follow the manufacturer's instructions. Refuel outdoors only, and only when cool. Keep your kerosene heater at least three feet away from furniture and other flammable objects.

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IF INDOORS

Stay indoors and dress warmly.

Conserve Fuel

Lower the thermostat to 65 degrees during the day and 55 degrees at night. Close off unused rooms.

If the pipes freeze, remove any insulation or layers of newspapers and wrap in rags.

Completely open all faucets and pour hot water over the pipes, starting where they were most exposed to the cold (or where the cold was most likely to penetrate).

Listen to the radio or television to get the latest storm information.

IF OUTDOORS

Dress Warmly.

Wear loose-fitting, layered, lightweight clothing.

Layers can be removed to prevent perspiration and chill. Outer garments should be tightly woven and water repellent.

Mittens are warmer than gloves because fingers generate warmth when they touch each other.

Cover your mouth.

Protect your lungs from extremely cold air by covering your mouth when outdoors. Try not to speak unless absolutely necessary.

Avoid overexertion.

Cold weather puts an added strain on the heart. Unaccustomed exercise such as shoveling snow or pushing a car can bring on a heart attack or make other medical conditions worse.

Watching for signs of frostbite and hypothermia.

(See *Frostbite and Hypothermia*).

Keep dry.

Change wet clothing frequently to prevent a loss of body heat. Wet clothing loses all of its insulation value and transmits heat rapidly.

Wind Chill

"Wind chill" is a calculation of how cold it feels outside when the actual temperature and the speed of the wind are combined with a temperature of just below freezing can have the same effect as a still air temperature about 35 degrees colder.

Frostbite & Hypothermia

Frostbite is a severe reaction to cold exposure that can permanently damage its victims. A loss of feeling and a white or pale appearance in fingers, toes, or nose and ear lobes is a symptom of frostbite.

Hypothermia is a condition brought on when the body temperature drops due to prolonged exposure to temperatures less than 55 degrees Fahrenheit.

Symptoms of hypothermia include uncontrollable shivering, slow speech, memory lapses, frequent stumbling, drowsiness and exhaustion.

If frostbite or hypothermia is suspected, warm the person and see immediate medical assistance. Never give a frostbite or hypothermia victim something with caffeine in it (like coffee) or alcohol. Caffeine, a stimulant can cause the heart to beat faster and hasten the effects the cold has on the body. Alcohol, a depressant, can slow the heart and also hasten the ill effects of cold body temperatures.