

Winter Storms & Extreme Cold

Most of the United States is at risk for winter storms. Severe storms can cause dangerous or life-threatening conditions. The dangers include blinding wind-driven snow, extreme cold, ice road conditions, avalanches, and downed trees and power lines. It's important to prepare before the winter storm season.



Before

- Stay informed of winter weather.
- Keep a sufficient supply of heating fuel. Consider storing a back-up fuel, such as a good supply of dry, seasoned wood for our fireplace or wood stove.
- Winterize your home. Insulate walls and attics, caulk and weather-strip doors and windows, and install storm windows or cover windows with plastic.
- Insulate pipes with insulation or newspaper and plastic and allow faucets to drip a little during cold weather to avoid freezing.
- Learn how to shut off water valves in case a pipe bursts.
- Winterize your car. Keep a shovel, a windshield scraper, and a small broom in your vehicle.
- Add rock salt, sand, and shovels to your emergency supplies kit, as well as extra socks, hats, mittens, and blankets.

During

- Conserve fuel.
- Stay safe and dry indoors.
- If you are outside, cover your mouth, keep dry, and avoid overexertion. Dress for the weather, wear layers, mittens, and a hat.
- Watch for signs of frostbite, including loss of feeling and white or pale extremities. If you detect any symptoms, seek immediate medical attention.
- Watch for signs of hypothermia, including uncontrollable shivering, memory loss, disorientation, incoherence, slurred speech, drowsiness, and apparent exhaustion. Get the victim to a warm location; remove any wet clothing; put the person in dry clothing and wrap

their entire body in a blanket; warm the center of the body first; give warm, non-alcoholic or non-caffeinated beverages; and seek medical attention.

- Drive only if absolutely necessary. If you become trapped while you have a cell phone, call 9-1-1, explain your situation, and tell them to try to track your location by the phone signal. If you must drive, travel during the day; don't travel alone; keep others informed of your schedule; and stay on main roads.
 - If a blizzard traps you in your car, pull off the highway and stay in your vehicle. Tie a brightly colored cloth to the antenna and turn on the inside light at night for rescuers to see. Run the engine and heater about 10 minutes each hour to keep warm. When the engine is running, open a downwind window slightly and periodically clear snow from the exhaust pipe. In extreme cold, use any available means to insulate and maintain body heat. Make sure at least one person is awake at all times to watch for rescuers.

After

- Check on neighbors or anyone who may need assistance.
- Use common sense when going outdoors. Dress warmly and always wear a hat. Stretch before shoveling heavy snow. Take frequent breaks. Use caution when walking on snowy walkways.
- Supervise children at all times. Children should be told to play only in safe, supervised areas outdoors—never in the street or snow banks on the side of the road.

Heating Safety

There is something about the winter months and curling up with a good book by the fireplace. But did you know that heating equipment is a leading cause of home fire deaths? With a few simple safety tips and precautions you can prevent most heating fires from happening.



Be Warm and Safe this Winter!

- Keep anything that can burn at least three-feet away from heating equipment, like the furnace, fireplace, wood stove, or portable space heater.
- Have a three-foot “kid-free zone” around open fires and space heaters.
- Never use your oven to heat your home.
- Have a qualified professional install stationary space heating equipment, water heaters or central heating equipment according to the local codes and manufacturer’s instructions.
- Have heating equipment and chimneys cleaned and inspected every year by a qualified professional.
- Remember to turn portable heaters off when leaving the room or going to bed.
- Always use the right kind of fuel, specified by the manufacturer, for fuel burning space heaters.
- Make sure the fireplace has a sturdy screen to stop sparks from flying into the room. Ashes should be cool before putting them in a metal container. Keep the container a safe distance away from your home.
- Test smoke alarms monthly.

Heating Equipment Smarts

Install wood burning stoves following manufacturer’s instructions or have a professional do the installation. All fuel-burning equipment should be vented to the outside to avoid carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning.



Install and maintain CO alarms to avoid the risk of CO poisoning. If you **smell** gas in your gas heater, do not light the appliance. Leave the home immediately and call your local fire department or gas company.

FACT

Half of home heating fires are reported during the months of December, January, and February.



Your Source for SAFETY Information

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