

Before Winter Storms and Extreme Cold

It is important to prepare for a winter storm before the storm hits.

Winter storms can range from moderate snow over a few hours to a blizzard with blinding, wind-driven snow that lasts for several days. Some winter storms are large enough to affect several states, while others affect only a single community. Many winter storms are accompanied by dangerously low temperatures and sometimes by strong winds, ice, sleet and freezing rain.

Preparation

Before winter approaches, stock up on the following supplies:

- Rock salt or more environmentally safe products to melt ice on walkways
- Sand to improve traction
- Snow shovels and other snow removal equipment
- Sufficient heating fuel. You may become isolated in your home and regular fuel sources may be cut off. Store a good supply of dry, seasoned wood for your fireplace or wood-burning stove.
- Adequate clothing and blankets to keep you warm

Make a family communications plan. Your family may not be together when disaster strikes, so it is important to know how you will contact one another, how you will get back together and what you will do in case of an emergency.

Listen to a weather radio or other local news channels for critical information from the National Weather Service (NWS). Be alert to changing weather conditions.

Bring pets and companion animals inside during winter weather. Move other animals or livestock to sheltered areas with non-frozen drinking water.

Minimize travel. If travel is necessary, keep a disaster supplies kit in your vehicle. Supplies should include:

- A shovel
- Windshield scraper and small broom
- Flashlight
- Battery-powered radio
- Extra batteries
- Water
- Snack food
- Matches
- Extra hats, socks and mittens
- First aid kit with a pocket knife
- Necessary medications
- Blanket(s)
- Tow chain or rope
- Road salt and sand
- Booster cables
- Emergency flares
- Fluorescent distress flag

Resources

- National Weather Service: www.weather.gov
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration: www.noaa.gov

Some content on this page was gathered from documents found on the website for the Federal Emergency Management Agency: www.ready.gov/winter-weather

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