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 [flooded home with basketball hoop and top of tree visible Flood Safety Tips »](#)

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Winter Storm Preparedness

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Winter Storm Safety

Winter Storm Safety

Learn how to stay safe during a blizzard and how to prevent or thaw frozen pipes Learn how to stay safe during a blizzard and how to prevent or thaw frozen pipes

Need Help Now?

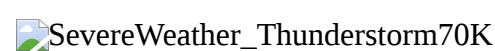
If you are in immediate need of help, please [contact your local Red Cross »](#) or [find an open shelter »](#)

Winter storms can bring extreme cold, freezing rain, sleet, heavy snowfall, ice, and high winds. These storms can cause transportation, heat, power, and communication disruptions. They also can close schools, stores, and workplaces.

Winters are getting warmer and shorter because of climate change. But, because a warmer atmosphere holds more moisture, heavier snowfalls are more likely to occur.

We can take action to prepare. Prepare now to protect yourself, your loved ones, and your home.

Take immediate precautions if you hear these words on the news:



Winter Storm WARNING: Life-threatening, severe winter conditions have begun or will begin within 24 hours.



Blizzard WARNING: Sustained winds or frequent gusts of 35 miles per hour or greater, plus considerable falling or blowing snow reducing visibility to less than a quarter mile, expected to prevail for three hours or longer.

Other winter storm words to listen for:

- **WIND CHILL Temperature:** How cold people and animals feel when outside. As wind increases, heat is carried away from your body at a faster rate, driving down your body temperature and making you feel much colder. The wind chill temperature is not the actual temperature but rather how wind and cold feel on exposed skin.

- **Winter Storm OUTLOOK:** Winter storm conditions possible in the next two to five days. Stay tuned to local media for updates.
- **Winter Storm WATCH:** Winter storm conditions possible within the next 36 to 48 hours. Review your winter storm plans and stay informed about weather conditions.
- **Winter Weather ADVISORY:** Winter weather conditions expected to cause significant inconveniences and may be hazardous but not life-threatening if you are cautious.

What Should You Do Before a Winter Storm?

Plan to Stay Warm

- Stay warm indoors to prevent frostbite and hypothermia.
- Before the winter season begins, make sure you can heat your home safely. Prepare your home to keep out the cold with insulation, caulking, and weather stripping.
- Consider using an indoor thermometer or thermostat to monitor the temperature inside.
- Plan to check on loved ones and neighbors to make sure they are staying warm. This is especially important for older adults and babies.
- Drink plenty of warm fluids but avoid caffeine and alcohol.
- Avoid travel if you can.
- If you must go outside, plan to dress properly. Keep your nose, ears, cheeks, chin, fingers, and toes covered in warm, dry clothing. These areas are the first to be at risk for frostbite.
 - Wear layers of loose clothing, a coat, hat, mittens, and water-resistant boots. Use a scarf to cover your face and mouth.
- Know where you will go if your home becomes too cold. You could go to a friend's house, a public library, or a warming center.

Gather Emergency Supplies

- Gather food, water, and medicine before a winter storm. Stores might be closed, and it may be unsafe to travel.
- Organize supplies into a Go-Kit and a Stay-at-Home Kit.
 - Go-Kit: at least three days of supplies you can carry with you if you need to go somewhere else to stay warm. Include critical backup batteries and chargers for your devices (cell phone, CPAP, wheelchair, etc.)
 - Stay-at-Home Kit: at least two weeks of supplies.
- Ensure you have enough warm clothing, such as hats, mittens, and blankets, for everyone in your household.
- You may lose access to drinking water. Set aside at least one gallon of drinking water per person per day.
- Consider having emergency supplies in your vehicle, such as a blanket, warm clothing, a first aid kit, and boots.
- Have a 1-month supply of needed medications and medical supplies. Consider keeping a list of your medications and dosages on a small card to carry with you.
- Keep personal, financial, and medical records safe and easy to access (hard copies or securely backed up).
- Have a snow shovel and ice-melting products to keep your walkways safe.

Learn Emergency Skills

- Learn first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR). Emergency services may be delayed.
- Learn how to spot and treat frostbite and hypothermia.
- Install and test smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors with battery back-ups.
- Be ready to live without power, gas, and water.
- Learn how to keep pipes from freezing.

Plan to Stay Connected

- Sign up for free emergency alerts from your local government.
- Plan to monitor local weather and news.
- Have a backup battery or a way to charge your cell phone.
- Have a battery-powered radio to use during a power outage.
- Understand the alerts you may receive:
 - A WATCH means Be Prepared!
 - A WARNING means Take Action!
- Create a support team to help everyone stay safe in a disaster. Plan how you can help each other.

Download Winter Storm Checklists and Fact Sheets

Checklist Available in Multiple Languages

[Power Outage Checklist](#)

[Frostbite and Hypothermia](#)


[Winter Storm Safety Checklist – English](#)

[Winter Storm Safety Checklist – Spanish](#)

Get Preparation Tips for the Whole Family

 A girl shows the home fire escape plan she just made

[Children](#)

 A multigenerational family including older adults

[Older Adults](#)

 A family including a person who uses a wheelchair

[People with Disabilities](#)

 A woman stays at a Red Cross shelter with her dog and bird

[Pets](#)

What Should You Do During a Winter Storm?

Stay Safe

- Use care with space heaters and fireplaces to prevent fires. Keep anything that could catch fire at least 3 feet (1 meter) from the heat!
- Avoid using candles because of the fire risk. Use battery-powered lights and flashlights instead.
- Prevent carbon monoxide poisoning. Carbon monoxide poisoning is common during power outages when people use other means to heat and cook. You can prevent carbon monoxide poisoning.
 - Only use generators, grills, and camp stoves outdoors and away from windows.
 - Carbon monoxide kills. If you start to feel sick, dizzy, or weak, get to fresh air right away – do not delay.
- To prevent carbon monoxide poisoning and home fires, never heat your home with a cooking oven or stove.

Act Fast if You See Signs of Frostbite or Hypothermia

- Frostbite is when a part of your body freezes. Your nose, ears, cheeks, chin, fingers, and toes often are the first affected. People may experience pain, numbness, and a change of skin color.
 - What to do for frostbite: Move to a warm place. Warm the affected area gently by soaking in warm water (NOT hot) until the skin appears normal and feels warm. Seek emergency medical care.
- Hypothermia can kill you. It occurs when your body loses heat faster than it can produce heat. This causes a dangerously low body temperature. Older adults, babies, children, and people with certain health conditions are more at risk.
 - Shivering is one of the first signs of hypothermia; other signs include confusion, drowsiness, and slurred speech.
 - What to do for hypothermia: Seek emergency medical care right away. Move to a warm place. Remove any wet clothing and warm the body slowly.

How Can You Stay Safe While Driving?

Driving in Winter Conditions

- Check your vehicle emergency supplies kit and replenish it if necessary.
- Bring enough of the following for each person:
 - Blankets or sleeping bag
 - Rain gear, extra sets of dry clothing, mittens, socks, and wool hats
 - Newspapers for insulation
 - Plastic bags for sanitation
 - Canned fruit, nuts, and high energy snacks
 - Warm broth in a thermos and several bottles of water
- Bring your cell phone and make sure the battery is charged.
- Plan to travel during daylight and, if possible, take another person with you.
- Let someone know your destination, your route, and when you expect to arrive.
- Before leaving, check the weather reports for all areas you will be passing through.

- Watch out for sleet, freezing rain, freezing drizzle, and dense fog.

If You Are Stranded

- Stay in the vehicle and wait for help. Do not leave the vehicle to search for assistance unless help is visible within 100 yards (91 meters).
- Display a trouble sign to indicate you need help. Hang a brightly colored cloth (preferably red) on the radio antenna and raise the hood after snow stops falling.
- Turn on the engine for about 10 minutes each hour. Use the heater while the engine is running. Keep the exhaust pipe clear of snow, and slightly open a downwind window for ventilation.
- Leave the overhead light on when the engine is running so that you can be seen.
- Do light exercises to keep up circulation. Clap your hands and move your arms and legs occasionally.
- If more than one person is in the vehicle, take turns sleeping.
- Huddle together for warmth. Wrap yourself in newspapers, maps, and even the removable floor mats to help trap more body heat.
- Watch for signs of [frostbite and hypothermia](#).
- Drink fluids to avoid dehydration, which can make you more susceptible to the ill effects of cold and to heart attacks.
- Avoid overexertion. Shoveling snow or pushing a vehicle can bring on a heart attack or make other medical conditions worse.

Additional Winter Safety Resources

 Icicles hanging from an exposed pipe

[How to Prevent & Thaw Frozen Pipes](#)

 An emergency power generator

[How to Use Generators Safely](#)

 A green eyed cat sitting in snow

[Protect Your Pets During a Storm](#)

 A person walks home through falling snow

[Learn About Frost Bite & Hypothermia](#)

How Can You Stay Safe After a Winter Storm?

Stay Safe

- If you need to go outside, use extreme caution when driving or walking on ice.

- Avoid damaged or fallen power lines. They can electrocute you.
- Be aware of branches, trees, and ice that may fall.
- Avoid overexertion when shoveling snow. Take frequent breaks and, if possible, work with a partner.
- Use ice-melting products to keep your walkways safe.
- Go to a public library, shopping mall, or warming center if your home becomes too cold.

Take Care of Yourself


- It's normal to have a lot of bad feelings, stress, or anxiety.
- Eat healthy food and get enough sleep to help you deal with stress.
- You can contact the Disaster Distress Helpline for free if you need to talk to someone. Call or text 1-800-985-5990.

More Recovery Tips


Once you are physically safe, take time to ensure your family's emotional and financial well-being.

[View Recovery Guides](#)

Explore Related Safety Topics

 Red Cross Emergency Flood


[Flood](#)

 Dark sky in power outage

[Power Outage](#)


 A family in a Red Cross shelter after a disaster

[Recovering Emotionally](#)

 A Red Cross volunteer helps a homeowner sift debris after a wildfire

[Recovering Financially](#)

Free App to Help Your Family Stay Safe

 emergency app icon

Download the FREE Emergency App

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Aplicación de Emergencias - ahora disponible en [español »](#) también!

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Help people affected by disasters big and small.

\$75

\$125

\$250

\$500

\$1000

\$

\$10 is the minimum online donation.

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