



Winter Storms—Are You Ready?

A winter storm can cause steady snow over a few hours or a blizzard that lasts several days. Winter storms can happen suddenly and be very dangerous. Planning now for winter storms can help you stay safe.



What problems can winter storms cause?

- Snow and ice can build up on power lines and break them. This could leave you without power for days.
- Extremely cold weather can cause water in pipes to freeze. Read the tips on page two to learn what to do with frozen pipes.
- Snow and ice can make it hard to travel. You may not be able to get to the store to pick up food, water, medication and other supplies.

How can I get my home ready for winter storms?

- Winterize your home to keep it warm (and save money on heating):
 - Insulate walls, attics, and pipes
 - Caulk and weather-strip doors and windows
 - Install storm windows or cover windows with plastic sheeting
- Get the outside of your home ready for winter by:
 - Clearing leaves from rain gutters
 - Repairing roof leaks
 - Cutting away tree branches that could fall on it during a storm

How can I get ready for a power outage?

Plan now by thinking about food, water, heat, light, power and communication:

- **Food:** Keep a three-day supply of non-perishable food and a manual can opener in your home. Choose canned or other foods that you can eat without heating. When the power first goes out, keep foods from the refrigerator cold by keeping the door closed. After the first day, throw out foods from the refrigerator. Throw out food that is in the freezer after two days since it will not be safe to eat.
- **Water:** You may lose your water supply if you have well water and an electric pump. No matter where you get your water from, you need a three-day emergency supply of water. Store at least one gallon for each person for each day. This means that if there are 2 people in your house you need to store 2 gallons of water for each day that you may be without water.
- **Heat:** Keep blankets and warm clothing in your home. If you have a fireplace or wood stove, store some extra firewood. People sometimes heat their homes unsafely during power outages and this can cause carbon monoxide poisoning. If you plan to use a fireplace or wood-burning stove, make sure they are well ventilated. Never use a gas oven to heat your home since this could also cause carbon monoxide poisoning.

- **Light:** Keep flashlights and extra batteries in your home. If you plan to use candles or kerosene lanterns watch them carefully. They can cause fires if they tip over or get too close to fabrics (such as curtains or blankets).
- **Power:** Write down your utility company's phone number and call them if the power goes out. Do not touch downed power lines because they can electrocute you. You may want a backup electrical generator if there are frequent power outages where you live or if you rely on medical equipment that needs power.
- **Communication:** Get a battery or crank-powered AM/FM radio to listen to storm updates. Analog phones (the kind that plug into a wall jack) will work when the power is out, so keep one in your home. Cell phones will also work but you will not be able to recharge them. Cordless phones will not work during power outages.

What can I do if I lose heat?

Take steps to trap warm air and safely keep warm until the heat comes back on:

- Trap as much heat in your home as you can while the power is out:
 - Hang blankets over windows and doorways
 - Stuff towels or rags in cracks under doors
 - Stay in a well-insulated room
- Dress warmly. Wear hats, scarves, gloves and layered clothing.
- Open your faucets to a steady drip so pipes do not freeze.
- Eat and drink. Food gives your body energy to stay warm and drinking keeps you hydrated.
- Call family, neighbors, or friends and ask to stay with them if the heat stays off and it is still cold outside. If there is an emergency shelter nearby, you may want to stay there.

Add these items to your Winter Emergency Supply Kit:

- Blankets
- Warm socks, mittens, and a hat

What should I do if the pipes freeze?

If your pipes or water meters freeze:

- Turn on a faucet near the section of frozen pipe. This will let steam from the melting ice escape.
- Point a hair dryer or heater at the frozen section of pipe.
- Never use an open flame to thaw a frozen pipe. This could cause a fire or a steam explosion.

To learn more visit the FEMA website at <http://www.fema.gov/hazard/winter/index.shtm>



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