

# Preparing for Winter Weather

**Every household should be equipped with a Disaster Supply Kit. Be sure to include the following:**

1. Rock Salt to melt ice on walkways
2. Sand to maintain traction
3. Snow Shovels and other snow removal equipment

## **Prepare Your Home and Your Family**

- Prepare for possible isolation **in your home** by having sufficient heating fuel. Include storing a good supply of dry, seasoned wood for your fireplace or wood-burning stove.
- **Winterize your home** by insulating walls & attics, caulking & weather-stripping doors & windows, installing storm windows or covering windows with plastic.
- Clear rain gutters; repair roof leaks and cut away tree branches that could fall on a house or other structure during a storm.
- **Insulate pipes** with insulation or newspapers and plastic & allow faucets to drip a little during cold weather to avoid freezing.
- **Keep fire extinguishers on hand** and make sure everyone in your house knows how to use them. House fires pose an additional risk, as more people turn to alternate heating sources without taking the necessary safety precautions.
- **Learn how to shut off water valves** (in case a pipe bursts).
- Hire a contractor to check the structural ability of the roof to sustain unusually heavy weight from the accumulation of snow - or water.

## **Prepare Your Car—Check or have a mechanic check the following items on your car:**

- **Antifreeze levels** - ensure they are sufficient to avoid freezing.
- **Battery and ignition system** - should be in top condition and battery terminals should be clean.
- **Brakes** - check for wear and fluid levels.
- **Exhaust system** - check for leaks / crimped pipes and repair or replace as necessary. *Carbon monoxide is deadly with no warning.*
- **Fuel and air filters** - replace and keep water out of the system by using additives and maintaining a full tank of gas.
- **Heater and defroster** - ensure they work properly.
- **Lights and flashing hazard lights** - check for serviceability.
- **Oil** - check for level and weight.
- **Thermostat** - ensure it works properly.
- **Windshield wiper equipment** - repair any problems and maintain proper washer fluid level.
- **Install good winter tires.** Make sure the tires have adequate tread.
- **Maintain at least a half tank of gas** during the winter season.
- **Place a winter emergency kit in each car** with a shovel, windshield scraper / small broom, flashlight, battery powered radio, extra batteries, water, snack food, matches, extra hats, socks and mittens, first aid kit with pocket knife, necessary medications, blanket(s), tow chain or rope, road salt / sand, booster cables, emergency flares, fluorescent distress flag



# Winter Weather Safety Tips

## **FIRE SAFETY:**

- Use only portable heating equipment that is approved for indoor use.
- Keep combustible materials, including furniture, drapes, and carpeting at least three feet away from the heat source. NEVER drape clothes over a space heater to dry.
- Never leave children alone in the room where a space heater is running. Turn it off when you are unable to closely monitor it.
- Be careful not to overload electrical circuits.
- Make sure you have a working smoke detector in every room. Check and change batteries often.

For Wood-burning stoves, fireplaces and heaters:

- Always keep a screen around an open flame.
- Never use gasoline to start your fireplace.
- Never burn charcoal indoors.
- Do not close the damper when ashes are hot.
- Have your chimney checked before the season for creosote buildup -- and then clean it.
- Have a working fire extinguisher and smoke detectors. Establish a well-planned escape route with the entire family.

**CARBON MONOXIDE SAFETY** – CO Poisoning is a silent, deadly killer claiming about 1,000 lives each year in the US.

- **NEVER** run generators indoors. • **NEVER** use charcoal to cook indoors. • **NEVER** use a gas oven to heat your home.
- Install a carbon monoxide detector in your home and check it regularly to make sure the battery is working.
- Make sure your heating system is kept clean and properly vented; have worn or defective parts replaced.
- Don't heat your home with a gas stove or oven.
- Do not use any gas-powered appliance, charcoal grill, or hibachi indoors.
- Open your garage door before starting your car and do not leave the motor running in an enclosed area. Clear exhaust pipes before starting a car or truck after it snows.
- **The most common symptom of carbon monoxide poisoning is headache.** Symptoms may also include dizziness, chest pain, nausea, and vomiting. In severe cases, people can become increasingly irritable, agitated and confused, eventually becoming lethargic and lapsing into unconsciousness.
- If you suspect carbon monoxide poisoning, call **911**, and get the victim to fresh air immediately, and open windows.

**If you lose heat or power**, take measures to trap existing warm air, and safely stay warm until heat returns:

- Insulate your home - hang blankets over windows and doorways and stay in a well-insulated room while power is out.
- Dress warmly. Wear hats, scarves, gloves, and layered clothing.
- If you have a working fireplace, use it for heat and light, but be sure to keep the damper open for ventilation.
- Open your faucets to a steady drip so pipes do not freeze.
- Eat! Food provides your body with needed energy to produce its own heat and drinking helps your body avoid dehydration.
- If the cold persists and your heat is not restored, call family, neighbors, or friends to see if you can stay with them.



### Generator Safety

Electric generators can provide you with piece of mind and convenience when you are faced with a temporary loss of electric service. Follow these safety guidelines when operating a generator:

- Before installing a generator, be sure to properly disconnect from your utility electrical service. Have your generator installed by a qualified electrician.
- Run generators outside, downwind of structures. NEVER run a generator indoors. Deadly carbon monoxide gas from the generator's exhaust can spread throughout enclosed spaces. Install a carbon monoxide detector.
- Fuel spilled on a hot generator can cause an explosion. If your generator has a detachable fuel tank remove it before refilling. If this is not possible, shut off the generator and let it cool before refilling.
- Do not exceed the rated capacity of your generator. Most of the small, home-use portable generators produce from 350 to 12,000 watts of power. Overloading your generator can damage it, the appliances connected to it, and may cause a fire. Follow the manufacturer's instructions.
- Keep children away from generators at all times.

### Snow Blower Safety

Be sure to read your owner's manual and follow these tips:

- Never leave your snow blower running and unattended.
- Make sure the discharge chute is not aimed at passing motorists or pedestrians.
- Never put your hands into the discharge chute or augers to clear stuck snow and ice.
- Never add fuel when the engine is running and hot.
- Make sure you know how to turn the machine off quickly.

### Dress for the Weather

- Wear several layers of loose fitting, warm clothing. The outer garments should be tightly woven and water repellent.
- **Wear mittens and a hat.** Mittens are warmer than gloves.
- **Cover your mouth** with a scarf to protect your lungs.
- **Avoid overexertion when shoveling snow.** Overexertion can bring on a heart attack—a major cause of death in the winter.
- **Keep dry.** Change wet clothing frequently to prevent loss of body heat.
- **Watch for signs of frostbite.** These include loss of feeling and white or pale appearance in extremities such as fingers, toes, ear lobes, and the tip of the nose. If symptoms are detected, get medical help immediately.
- **Watch for signs of hypothermia.** These include uncontrollable shivering, memory loss, disorientation, incoherence, slurred speech, drowsiness and apparent exhaustion.
- **If symptoms of hypothermia are detected:** get the victim to a warm location, remove wet clothing, put the person in dry clothing and wrap their entire body in a warm blanket, warm the center of their body first, give warm non-alcoholic or non-caffeinated beverages if the victim is conscious and get medical help as soon as possible.

