



PREPARING FOR WINTER STORMS

Winter storms can range from moderate snow over a few hours to blizzard conditions with blinding, wind driven snow or freezing rain that lasts several days. The time to prepare is before the snow and ice begin to fall. Begin by learning the warning terms. A "winter storm watch indicates that severe winter weather may affect your area. A "winter storm warning indicates that severe winter weather conditions are definitely on the way. A "blizzard warning means that large amounts of falling or blowing snow and sustained winds of at least 35 miles per hour are expected for several hours.

Before

- Know the terms used by weather forecasters.
- Consider purchasing a battery-powered NOAA weather radio and stock extra batteries.
- Keep rock salt to melt walkway ice and sand to improve traction.
- Have an alternate heat source and a supply of fuel.
- Install storm windows or cover windows with plastic.
- Insulate walls and attics.
- Caulk and weather strip doors and windows.
- Keep your car "winterized with fresh antifreeze. Use snow tires.
- Keep the following items in your car:
 - Flashlights with extra batteries and bulb.
 - First aid kit with pocket knife and necessary medications.
 - Several blankets and sleeping bags.
 - Newspapers for insulation.
 - Plastic bags for sanitation.
 - Matches.
 - Set of mittens, socks, wool cap, rain gear and extra clothes.
 - Small sack of sand for generating traction under wheels.
 - Small shovel and tools (pliers, wrench, screwdriver).
 - Booster cables and tire chains or traction mats.
 - Cards, games, and puzzles.
 - Brightly colored cloth to use as a flag from your antenna.
 - Brightly colored large cloth to attract attention.
 - Canned fruits and nuts.
 - Non-electric can opener.
 - Bottled water.
- Change to make a phone call.

During

- Listen to NOAA Weather Radio or local radio or television for weather reports and emergency information.
- Wear several layers of loose-fitting, light-weight, warm clothing rather than one layer of heavy clothing.
- Wear mittens instead of gloves.
- Wear a hat -- most body heat is lost through the top of the head.
- Avoid overexertion.
- Watch for signs of frostbite and hypothermia.
- If symptoms are detected, get medical help immediately.

- A loss of feeling and a white or pale appearance in fingers, toes, or nose and ear lobes are symptoms of frostbite. Symptoms of hypothermia include uncontrollable shivering, slow speech, memory lapses, frequent stumbling, drowsiness, and exhaustion. If frostbite or hypothermia is suspected begin warming the person slowly. Warm the persons trunk first. Use your own body heat to help. Arms and legs should be warmed last since stimulation of the arms and legs can drive blood to the heart and lead to heart failure. Never give a frostbite or hypothermia victim something with caffeine in it or alcohol. Caffeine can cause the heart to beat faster and hasten the effects cold has on the body. Alcohol can slow the heart and also hasten ill effects of cold body temperature.
- Conserve fuel by keeping your house cooler than normal.
- Refuel kerosene heaters outside and keep them at least three feet from flammable objects.
- If caught in your car during a blizzard or winter storm remain in your vehicle and wait to be found.

[Washington State Emergency Management](#), *A Division of Washington Military Department*