

TIPS FOR DEALING WITH WINTER STORMS

Winter storms can be treacherous and damaging if you are unprepared. They can disrupt power supply and transportation and create home and personal safety issues. Bitter cold and winter storms kill more people than the number of Canadians killed by tornadoes, thunderstorms, lightning, floods and hurricanes combined. Being prepared can literally save your life.

When winter storms are expected, Emergency Management Ontario advises the public to follow these safety tips.

Personal Preparedness

If you are indoors

- Listen to the radio and/or television for weather reports and emergency information.
- Ensure you have a well-stocked emergency kit, including a good supply of food.
- Bring pets/companion animals inside during winter weather. Move other animals or livestock to sheltered areas with non-frozen drinking water.
- Stay indoors. If you must go outside, dress for the weather to avoid serious cold-related injuries.

If you are outdoors

- Avoid overexertion when shovelling snow. If you must shovel snow, ensure you take frequent breaks so as not to over-stress your body.
- Dress in several layers of lightweight clothing, wear mittens and a hat (preferably one that covers your ears).
- Wear waterproof, insulated boots to keep your feet warm and dry and to maintain your footing in ice and snow.
- Cover your mouth. Protect your lungs from extremely cold air by covering your mouth when outdoors.
- Change wet clothing frequently to prevent a loss of body heat. Wet clothing loses all of its insulating value and transmits heat rapidly.
- It is important to regularly check for frostbite, indicators include numbness or white areas on your face and extremities (ears, nose, cheeks, hands and feet in particular).

Home Preparedness

Getting your home ready

- Cover windows with plastic from the inside to keep cold air out.
- Run water, even at a trickle, to help prevent pipes from freezing.
- If the pipes freeze, remove any insulation or layers of newspapers and wrap pipes in rags. Completely open all faucets and pour hot water over the pipes, starting where they were most exposed to the cold (or where the cold was most likely to penetrate).
- Maintain ventilation when using kerosene heaters to avoid build-up of toxic fumes. Refuel kerosene heaters outside and keep them at least three feet from flammable objects.

If a power outage occurs

- First, check whether the power outage is limited to your home. If your neighbours' power is still on, check your own circuit breaker panel or fuse box. If the problem is not a breaker or a fuse, check the service wires leading to the house. If they are obviously damaged or on the ground, stay at least 10 meters back and notify your electric supply authority. Keep the number along with other emergency numbers near your telephone.
- Some gas fireplaces may work even after the power goes out. Check your owner's manual.

Vehicle Preparedness

Before driving

- Keep a winter survival kit in your vehicle (e.g. shovel, kitty litter, blanket, ice scraper, first aid kit, water, non-perishable food, flashlight, etc.). Having essential supplies can provide some comfort and safety for you and your passengers should you become stranded.
- Do a complete tune-up of your vehicle and ensure you have the correct tires for the appropriate season.
- Keep your fuel tank at least half full. Condensation can build up in a near-empty gas tank in extremely cold temperatures, which can cause your fuel line to freeze-up.
- Check weather and travel conditions before heading out. Don't take chances if the weather is bad. Allow yourself extra time for travel, or wait until conditions improve.
- Clear all snow and ice from your vehicle prior to driving and inform people of your route and expected arrival time. Ensure your cell phone is fully charged.

While driving

- Adjust your driving according to the weather conditions by increasing following distances and turning on your headlights.
- If visibility is poor, pull over to the side of the road as far as possible, preferably to a rest area.
- If you are parked on the side of the road, turn on your hazard lights so you are visible to others on the road.

If you're stuck in your vehicle

- If you are stranded, stay in your vehicle to avoid personal injury.
- Run your vehicle engine periodically for heat. Be sure to keep snow away from your exhaust pipe and open your window a crack to reduce the risk of carbon monoxide build-up.
- Put on your dome light rather than headlights to preserve battery power.

For more information contact:

[Emergency Management Ontario](#)

Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services

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