



Winter Storms

Everyone is potentially at risk during winter storms. The actual threat to you depends on your specific situation.

The Facts

Winter deaths related to ice and snow:

- About 70% occur in automobiles, due mainly to traffic accidents on icy roads.
- About 25% are people caught out in the storm.
- The majority of winter deaths are males over 40 years old.

Related to exposure to cold:

- 50% are people over 60 years old.
- Over 75% are males
- About 20% occur in the home.

Be Prepared in multiple places

At Home

Primary concerns are the potential loss of heat, power, telephone service, and a shortage of supplies if storm conditions continue for more than a day.

Have available:

- Flashlight and extra batteries.
- Battery-powered NOAA Weather Radio and portable radio to receive emergency information. These may be your only links to the outside.
- Extra food and water. High-energy food, such as dried fruit or candy, and food requiring no cooking or refrigeration is best.
- Extra medicine and baby items.
- First aid supplies.
- Heating fuel. Fuel carriers may not reach you for days after a severe winter storm.

- Emergency heating source, such as fireplace, wood stove, space heater, etc. Learn to use these items properly to prevent a fire. Have proper ventilation.
- Fire extinguisher and smoke detector. Test units regularly to ensure they are working properly.

In Vehicles

Plan your travel and check the latest weather reports to avoid the storm!

- Plan your travel and check the latest weather reports to avoid the storm!
- Carry a Winter Storm Survival Kit:

1. Blankets / Sleeping bags
2. Flashlight and extra batteries
3. First aid kit
4. High calorie, non-perishable food
5. Extra clothing to keep dry
6. Large empty can with cover with tissue and paper towels
7. Smaller can with water-proof matches
8. Sack of sand or cat litter
9. Windshield scraper and brush
10. Tool kit
11. Tow rope
12. Booster cables
13. Water container
14. Compass
15. Road Maps
16. Keep your gas tank near full to avoid ice in the tank and fuel lines
17. Try not to travel alone
18. Let someone know your timetable and primary and alternate routes

On the Farm

Move animals to sheltered areas. Shelter belts, properly laid out and oriented, are better protection for cattle than confining shelters, such as sheds. Haul extra feed to nearby feeding areas. Have a water supply available. Most animal deaths in winter storms are from dehydration.

Signs and Treatment of Cold Weather Exposure

Signs

When the body begins to lose heat faster than it can produce it, a condition called hypothermia begins to develop. The symptoms become very apparent, and include:

- Uncontrollable shivering
- Vague, slow, slurred speech
- Memory lapses; incoherence
- Immobile, fumbling hands
- Frequent stumbling; lurching gait
- Drowsiness
- Apparent exhaustion; inability to get up after a rest

Treatments

If a person shows any signs of overexposure to cold or wet and windy weather, take the following measures, even if the person claims to be in no difficulty. Often the person will not realize the seriousness of the situation.

- Get the person into dry clothing and into a warm bed or sleeping bag with a “hot” water bottle (which should actually be only warm to the touch, not hot), warm towels, heating pad, or some other such heat source.
- Concentrate heat on the trunk of the body first, that is, the shoulders, chest and stomach.
- Keep the head low and feet up to get warm flood circulating to the head.
- Give the person warm drinks
- Never give the person alcohol, sedatives, tranquilizers or pain relievers. They only slow down body processes even more.
- Keep the person quiet. Do not jostle, massage or rub.
- If symptoms are extreme, call for professional medical assistance immediately.

If You Must Go Outside

Observe the following safety measures:

- Avoid overexertion. Cold weather itself, without any physical exertion, puts an extra strain on the heart. If you add to this the strain of heavy physical activity such as shoveling snow, pushing an automobile or even walking too fast or too far, you risk damaging your body.
- Dress Warmly in loose-fitting, layered, lightweight clothing. Outer garments should be tightly woven and water repellent. Wear a hat. Protect your face and cover your mouth to protect your lungs from

very cold air. Wear mittens instead of gloves, they allow your fingers to move freely in contact with one another and will keep your hands much warmer.

- Watch for frostbite and other symptoms of cold-weather exposure. Frostbite causes a loss of feeling and a white or pale appearance in extremities such as fingers, toes, tip of nose, ear lobes. If such symptoms are detected, get medical attention immediately. Do not rub with snow or ice, this does not help the condition and, in fact, will make it worse. The best treatment for frostbite is the re-warming of the affected tissue, as described above in the section on treatment for cold weather exposure.
- Avoid alcoholic beverages. Alcohol causes the body to lose its heat more rapidly, even though one may feel warmer after drinking alcoholic beverages.
- Keep yourself and your clothes dry. Change wet socks and all other wet clothing as quickly as possible to prevent loss of body heat. Wet clothing loses all of its insulating value and transmits heat rapidly.
- If paralyzed persons or infants must go outside in severe weather, they should be checked frequently for signs of

Car Safety

If a blizzard traps you in your car...

- Don't panic! Stay in the vehicle. Do not attempt to walk in a blizzard. Disorientation comes quickly in blowing and drifting snow. Being lost in open country during a blizzard is extremely dangerous. You are more likely to be found in your car and will at least be sheltered there.
- Avoid overexertion and exposure. Exertions from attempting to push your car, shoveling heavy drifts, and performing other difficult chores during strong winds, blinding snow, and bitter cold or a blizzard may cause a heart attack, even for persons in apparently good physical condition.
- Beware of carbon monoxide. Run the engine, heater or catalytic heater sparingly, and only with a downwind window open for ventilation. Make sure that snow has not blocked the exhaust pipe. Keep a downwind window slightly open for fresh air. Freezing rain, wet snow and wind-driven snow can completely seal the passenger compartment.
- Exercise by clapping hands and moving arms and legs vigorously from time to time, and do not stay in one position for long. But don't overdo it. Exercise warms you but it also increases heat loss.
- Take turns keeping watch. If more than one person is in the car, don't all sleep at the same time. If alone, stay awake as long as possible.
- Turn on the dome light at night to make your car more visible to working crews.
- Remember, don't panic, stay with the car.