



October – December 2011

WINTER STORMS

Winter Storm Safety Rules

1. **Keep informed of winter storms** by listening to the latest National Weather Service warnings and bulletins on radio and television.
2. **Check battery-powered equipment** before the storm arrives. A portable radio or television set may be your only contact with the world outside the winter storm. Also check emergency cooking facilities and flashlights.
3. **Check your supply of heating fuel.** Fuel carriers may not be able to move if a winter storm buries your area in snow.
4. **Check your food supply.** Your supplies should include food that requires no cooking or refrigeration in case of power failure.
5. **Prevent fire hazards** due to overheated coal or oil-burning stoves, fireplaces, heaters, or furnaces.
6. **Stay indoors during storms** and very cold weather. If you must go out, avoid overexertion.
7. **Use moderation** when shoveling snow. It can be very exhausting for anyone not in good physical condition and may bring on a heart attack--a major cause of death during and after winter storms.
8. **Dress to fit the season.** If you spend much time outdoors, wear loose-fitting, lightweight, warm clothing in several layers; layers can be removed to prevent

perspiring and subsequent chill. Outer garments should be lightly woven, water repellent, and hooded. The hood should protect much of your face and cover your mouth to ensure warm breathing and protect your lungs from the extremely cold air. Remember that entrapped, insulating air, warmed by body heat, is the best protection against cold. Layers of protective clothing are more effective and efficient than single layers of thick clothing. Mittens, snug at the wrist, are better protection than fingered gloves.

Use of Automobiles During Winter Storms

Your automobile can be your best friend--or worst enemy--during winter storms, depending on your preparations. Get your car "winterized" before the storm season begins. Everything on the checklist shown below should be taken care of before winter storms strike your area:

Ignition, system Lubrication
Defroster, Battery
Snow tires, Lights
Heater, Chains
Wiper blades, Antifreeze
Brakes, Fuel system
Cooling system, Winter-grade oil
Tight exhaust system

1. **Winter Storm Car Kit.** Be equipped for the worst. Carry a winter storm car kit, especially if cross country travel is anticipated. The kit should contain blankets or sleeping bags, matches and candles, an empty 3-pound can with plastic cover, extra clothing, high-calorie nonperishable food, compass and road maps, knife, first aid kit, shovel, sack of sand, flashlight or signal light, windshield scraper, booster cables, two chains, fire extinguisher, and an axe.

2. **Winter travel** by automobile is serious business. Keep these points in mind, especially for severe storms:

- a. If the storm exceeds or even tests your limitations, seek available refuge immediately.
- b. Plan your travel and select primary and alternate routes.
- c. Check latest weather information by phone or on your radio.
- d. Try to travel with others along.
- e. Travel in convoy with another vehicle, if possible.
- f. Always fill the gasoline tank before entering open country, even for a short distance.
- g. Drive carefully and defensively.

3. **If you are trapped in a vehicle** by a blizzard, avoid overexertion and exposure. Exertion from attempting to push your car, shoveling heavy drifts, or performing other difficult chores during the strong winds, blinding snow, and bitter cold of a blizzard may cause a heart attack--even for persons in apparently good physical condition. Stay in your vehicle. Do not attempt to walk out of a blizzard. Disorientation comes quickly in blowing and drifting snow. Being lost in open country during a blizzard is almost certain death. You are more likely to be sheltered in your car.

Don't panic. Keep fresh air in your car. Freezing wet snow and wind-driven snow can completely seal the passenger compartment. Beware of the "gentle killers"--carbon monoxide and oxygen starvation. Run the motor and heater sparingly, and only with a rear window open for ventilation.

Exercise by clapping hands and moving arms and legs vigorously from time to time, and do not stay in one position for long. Turn on the dome light at night to make the vehicle visible to work crews. Keep watch. Do not permit all occupants of the car to sleep at once.

Hypothermia

Cold kills in two distinct steps:

Exposure and Exhaustion. The moment your body begins to lose heat faster than it produces it, you are undergoing exposure. Two things happen:

- You voluntarily exercise to stay warm.
- Your body makes involuntary adjustments (such as shivering) to preserve normal temperature in the vital organs.

Either response drains your energy reserves. The only way to stop the drain is to reduce the degree of exposure. The time to prevent hypothermia is during the period of exposure and gradual exhaustion.

Hypothermia. If exposure continued until your energy reserves are exhausted:

- Cold reaches the brain depriving you of judgment and reasoning power. You will not realize this is happening.
- You will lose control of your hands (they will become numb and you will not be able to grasp or hold onto things.) This is hypothermia. Your internal temperature is sliding downward. Without treatment, this slide leads to stupor, collapse, and death. hypothermia.

Your first Line of Defense:

- Stay Dry
- Be Aware of the Wind
- Understand Cold
- Use your Clothes
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Your Second Line of Defense: Terminate Exposure

- Get out of the wind and rain. Build a fire
- Never ignore shivering.
- Make camp! Forestall exhaustion.
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Your Third Line of Defense: Detect Hypothermia

- If your party is exposed to wind, cold, and wet,
- **think hypothermia.** Watch yourself and others for symptoms.
- • Uncontrollable fits of shivering
- • Vague, slow, slurred speech
- • Memory lapses. Incoherence
- • Immobile, fumbling hands
- • Frequent stumbling. Lurching gait.