

ARE YOU READY?



How to get ready for winter storms

Many parts of the United States are ready and able to handle heavy snow storms. But in the past few years, some states that normally don't get very cold have been overwhelmed by winter snow. Whether you live somewhere that is used to winter or in a sunny place that almost never sees snow, it's good to be ready just in case.



Before a winter storm

Getting ready for a winter storm can help you get ready for any emergency. Take stock of what you have in your home and make sure you have the following supplies: battery-powered radio and extra batteries, food that can be eaten without cooking, plenty of bottled water (at least one gallon per person per day), candles and matches, enough oil for your furnace for heat and a gas-powered heat source.

It's a good idea to get your car ready, too. Make sure you have antifreeze, a snow scraper, a flashlight, tow chains and a bag of salt. Keep the gas tank full. If you live in a rural area, it's also good to have a flare gun and distress flag, just in case. If you can, keep some extra food and water in your car in case you are stranded during a storm.

If someone in your home has special health needs, call your local fire department before a storm and let them know you may need assistance if you are stuck in your home.



During a winter storm

This may sound strange, but if your home is heated by an oil-burning furnace, you should turn down the heat in your house during a winter storm and add layers of clothing! Do this to save heating fuel so it lasts longer. But don't make the temperature so low that it would cause anyone in your home to get sick. If you have to use gas heat in your home, open windows slightly so fumes don't build up.

Don't drive your car in a storm. If you have to travel, use public transportation or don't drive alone. If you get stuck in your car during a storm, try to pull off to the side of the road. Stay in your car, especially if it's night time, and call the fire department for help. Don't get out of your car; even a short walk during a winter storm can be very dangerous.

After a winter storm

Once it stops snowing, shovel snow in small amounts and go slow. Don't overdo it and shovel only what is necessary. Too much snow shoveling can cause health problems, from back pain to heart attacks. Wear mittens (warmer than gloves), a hat (most body heat is lost through your head), and a scarf to cover your mouth (to protect your lungs from very cold air). Use salt or sand on ice patches to protect yourself and other people from falling.

Don't drive your car until roads are plowed. Once you do go out, don't travel alone and drive slowly.

