

Emergency Preparedness for Snowstorms & Power Outages

Winter storms can arrive quickly and leave lasting impacts—heavy snow, ice, and strong winds often bring power outages, hazardous travel conditions, and limited access to emergency services. Being prepared **before** a snowstorm hits can protect your family, reduce stress, and help prevent injuries. Emergency preparedness doesn't have to be complicated; a few thoughtful steps can make all the difference.

Why Winter Emergency Preparedness Matters

Snowstorms and power outages increase the risk of:

- Slips, falls, and hypothermia
- Carbon monoxide poisoning from improper generator/heating use
- House fires from candles and space heaters
- Motor vehicle crashes during icy conditions
- Delayed emergency response times

Preparation helps you stay safe, warm, and connected when conditions are at their worst.

Build a Winter Emergency Kit

Every household should have a basic emergency kit that can sustain everyone for **at least 72 hours**.

Essentials include:

- Water (one gallon per person per day)
- Non-perishable food and a manual can opener
- Flashlights and extra batteries (avoid candles when possible)
- Fully charged power banks for phones and medical devices
- Prescription medications and basic first aid supplies
- Blankets, warm clothing, hats, and gloves
- Important documents stored in a waterproof container

Winter-specific additions:

- Extra blankets or sleeping bags
 - Battery-powered or hand-crank radio
 - Ice melt and a sturdy snow shovel
 - Extra pet food and supplies
-

Prepare Your Home Before the Storm

Taking preventive steps can reduce risks during extended outages:

- **Insulate pipes** and allow faucets to drip during extreme cold to prevent freezing.
 - **Install and test smoke and carbon monoxide detectors**—especially critical when using alternate heat sources.
 - **Stock up on heating fuel** if you rely on oil, propane, or wood.
 - **Set refrigerators and freezers to the coldest setting** to help food last longer during outages.
 - **Charge devices** and battery backups ahead of the storm.
-

Use Heat and Power Safely

During power outages, improper heating methods can be deadly.

- **Never use grills, camp stoves, or generators indoors** or in garages.
 - **Keep generators at least 20 feet from doors and windows** and use outdoor-rated extension cords.
 - **Use space heaters safely**—keep them at least three feet from anything flammable and never leave them unattended.
 - **Avoid candles**; use flashlights instead to reduce fire risk.
-

Plan for Communication and Medical Needs

- Identify how you'll receive emergency alerts if internet or power is lost.

- Keep a list of emergency contacts written down.
 - If you rely on **electric-powered medical equipment**, register with your utility company and local emergency management agency.
 - Check on neighbors, especially older adults and those with disabilities.
-

Travel Only If Necessary

If travel is unavoidable:

- Keep a winter emergency kit in your vehicle (blankets, flashlight, shovel, traction aids, water, and snacks).
 - Let someone know your route and expected arrival time.
 - Slow down, increase following distance, and avoid sudden movements on icy roads.
-

After the Storm Passes

- Continue to monitor weather and utility updates.
 - Watch for downed power lines and report them immediately.
 - Clear snow and ice safely—pace yourself to prevent overexertion and heart-related emergencies.
-

Snowstorms and power outages are part of winter—but serious injuries don't have to be. Taking time now to prepare your home, family, and community can prevent emergencies from becoming tragedies.

Preparedness is an essential part of prevention of injury. Stay informed, stay ready, and stay safe this winter.