Winter Weather Prep: How to Stay Safe and Warm This Season

Winter weather brings unpredictable and severe conditions. As temperatures drop, staying safe and warm can feel daunting. Winter storms can lead to power outages, disrupted communications, icy roads, and dangerously cold temperatures. In 2025 alone, severe winter weather caused at least $3.38 billion in damage across the country. Knowing how to prepare your home, vehicle, and family before storms hit is essential to minimizing risks.

Why Preparation Matters

Winter weather is deceptively dangerous, combining extreme cold, ice, snow, and wind to create multiple hazards. Awareness, preparation, and cautious behavior are essential to protect health, prevent injury, and minimize damage to property.

Winter weather risks include:

- Slips, falls, and hypothermia
- Carbon monoxide poisoning
- House fires
- Motor vehicle crashes on icy roads
- Delayed emergency responses

Make a Plan and Build a Kit

ATSPA recommends that every household have a Winter Emergency Kit that can sustain every member for at least 72 hours.

Core essentials of this include:

- 1 gallon of water per person per day
- Non-perishable food + manual can opener
- Flashlights + extra batteries (avoid candles)
- Fully charged power banks for phones/medical devices
- Prescription medications + basic first aid

- Blankets, warm clothing, hats, gloves
- Important documents in waterproof container
- Extra blankets or sleeping bags
- Hand-crank radio
- Ice melt and a sturdy snow shovel
- Extra pet food and supplies

Get Your Home Ready

Winter storms can cause heavy damage abruptly. Taking preventative 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.
- Use flashlights instead to reduce fire risk.

Plan for Communication and Medical Needs

- Identify how you'll receive emergency alerts if the 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.

Severe weather and power outages are an unavoidable part of winter, but serious injuries and property loss don't have to be. Taking time now to prepare your home, vehicle, and family can prevent minor inconveniences from turning into dangerous emergencies. **Stay informed, stay ready, and stay safe this winter.**