

WINTER TERMINOLOGY

It's important that you understand winter storm terms so that you can prepare adequately, whether you are walking to the store or driving across the state.

- **Winter Weather Advisory** : Issued when snow, sleet, freezing rain, or combination of precipitation types is expected to cause a significant inconvenience but not serious enough to warrant a warning.
- **Snow Advisory**:
 - 2-4 inches of snow in a 12 hour period
- **Freezing Rain Advisory**:
 - Ice accumulations of less than 1/4 inch
- **Ice Storm Warning**:
 - 1/4 inch or more of ice accumulation

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- **Winter Storm Watch:** Issued when there is the potential for significant and hazardous winter weather within 48 hours. It does not mean that significant and hazardous winter weather will occur...it only means it is *possible*.
 - Significant and hazardous winter weather is defined as:
 - Over 5 inches of snow (and/or sleet); OR
 - Glaze accumulation (freezing rain) of 1/4 inch or more; OR
 - Enough ice accumulation to cause damage to trees or power lines; OR
 - A life threatening or damaging combination of snow and/or ice accumulation with wind.
- **Winter Storm Warning:** Issued when a significant combination of hazardous winter weather is occurring or imminent.
 - Significant and hazardous winter weather is defined as a combination of:
 - Over 5 inches of snow/sleet; AND/OR
 - Glaze accumulation (freezing rain) of 1/4 inch or more; AND/OR
 - Enough ice accumulation to cause damage to trees or power lines; AND/OR
 - A life threatening or damaging combination of snow and/or ice accumulation with wind.
- **Heavy Snow Warning:** Issued for the Baltimore/Washington area when
 - 5 inches or more of snow in 12 hours
 - 7 inches or more in 24 hours.
- **Blizzard Warning:** Issued when the following conditions are occurring or expected within the next 12 to 18 hours. *(There is no temperature requirement that must be met to achieve blizzard conditions.)*
 - Snow and/or blowing snow reducing visibility to 1/4 mile or less for 3 hours or longer; AND
 - Sustained winds of 35 mph or greater or frequent gusts to 35 mph or greater.

HOME TIPS

- **Every home should have a severe weather safety kit.** Items to include are a battery-operated radio, flashlight, candles, matches, extra batteries and a set of house and car keys. Stock ample wood for the fireplace and plenty of non-perishable foods that can be eaten without heating. Keep bottled water and juices on hand in case your power and water supplies are interrupted. Another item to consider including in the kit is prescription medication, especially if there is a chance that roads will be impassable.
- **Remove dead tree branches before the storm comes.** Ice and snow, coupled with winter winds, can cause limbs to snap. Not only is this a hazard to your roof and car, but it can injure an unlucky passerby.
- **Repair hand railings. Keep sidewalks and steps clear of snow and ice.**
- **Clean gutters before the snow comes.** Snow and ice can build up pretty quickly, especially if your gutters are clogged with leaves. When thawing begins, the water has nowhere to drain and can back up under your roof and eaves, causing wall and ceiling damage.
- **Check your homeowners insurance policy now** to make sure coverage is adequate for the type of winter weather in your area - after a winter-related loss can sometimes be too late.
- **Make sure auxiliary heaters and fireplaces are adequately maintained, ventilated and serviced.** Before installing a wood-burning stove, check with local fire officials as to codes and proper installation techniques. Do not use kerosene heaters or run generators inside the home. Carbon monoxide levels can build up unexpectedly.
- **During the winter, drain pipes if your power goes off or if you plan on an extended leave from home.** Draining pipes will keep them from freezing or bursting should there be a sudden drop in temperature or power failure. To drain, turn off the water heater and main water supply, open all faucets in the house and drain the system by keeping the valves open.

CAR TIPS

- **Prepare an emergency kit to keep in your car:**
 - At least two blankets.
 - Waterproof matches and candles.
 - Extra clothing, particularly boots and mittens.
 - A steel shovel, sand and rope for a lifeline.
 - Dry food rations such as raisins, nuts and candy.
 - A flashlight with spare batteries and emergency flares.
 - Garbage bags to be used as insulation against the wind.
 - A metal coffee can for storing small items and melting snow for drinking.
 - Change for pay phones.
- **Winterize your car:**
 - Get a tune-up to save wear and tear on the battery. Consider snow tires or chains as your travel dictates. Chains are best on glare ice.
- **Other car care tips:**
 - Check radiator coolant and sturdiness of hoses.
 - Refer to the car manual to see if a lighter grade oil is recommended for winter driving.
 - Change burned-out headlights, tail lights and turn signals.
 - Check tire tread and wear. The minimum tread is 1/16" for adequate traction.
 - Make sure brakes are in proper working order.
 - Keep spare window washer fluid in the car and make sure the washer blades are in good working condition.

WINTER DRIVING TIPS

- **When you're on the road in winter, pay attention to weather reports.** Also, respect winter driving times and remember there are only nine hours of daylight driving time in mid-winter, and even fewer if a storm is imminent. It's a good idea to keep your cell phone with you at all times.
- **Keep your windows clear, inside and out.** Clear head, tail and brake lights.
- **Keep your gas tank at least half full.** Fill the tank before you park for lengthy periods. This will help prevent fuel line freeze-up and be a life-saver if you become stranded and rely on your car for shelter.
- **Leave ample stopping time between yourself and the driver in front of you.** Braking distance can be up to nine times greater on snowy, icy surfaces than on dry roads.
- **Take any corrective action gradually.** Gently apply pressure to your brakes to stop. If you start to skid, turn your wheels in the same direction as your rear tires and then steer in the direction you want the car to go.
- **Lock your car, even in bad weather.** Auto thieves work year-round. If your lock freezes, heat your key. Don't pour hot water on the lock - it'll just re-freeze.
- **If there is a need to turn on your wipers, there's a need for you to turn on your headlights.** Low beams are advisable in wet weather.
- **Bridges get slick and icy before roads do.** Bridge temperatures can be 5-6 degrees colder than roadways, so drive with extreme caution when weather gets around the freezing mark.
- **Do not pump ABS brakes.** Apply firm, continuous brake pressure to active anti-lock braking systems.

SURVIVAL TIPS IF YOU'RE STRANDED IN A CAR

- **Remain with your car.** If nothing else, you are guaranteed shelter, something you will not have if you leave the car. You are more likely to be found if you are with your vehicle.
- **Tie a bright colored (preferably red) cloth to your antenna, driver door handle, window or outside mirror.** Turn on hazard lights. Turn on inside light at night so work crews or rescuers can see you.
- **Run your engine and heater no more than ten minutes every hour,** leaving a upwind window slightly open for ventilation. Be careful not to waste battery power. Balance electrical energy needs - the use of lights, heat, and radio - with supply.
- **Keep the exhaust pipe clear of snow.** Poisonous gases filter into your car if the pipe is clogged.
- **Keep warm. Use floor mats, seat cover, paper maps, and blankets for added warmth.** If you must leave your vehicle during a blizzard, secure a lifeline of rope or cord to your car to avoid becoming lost or disoriented.
- **Eat, stay hydrated, but never eat snow.** Eating helps the body gain energy. Drink fluids to avoid dehydration. Eating snow will chill you. Instead, melt it in a coffee can for drinking water.
- **Don't panic.** Your chances for rescue are better if you stay in the car.

BE AWARE OF ..

- **Hypothermia**

- Hypothermia develops when a person's temperature falls below normal due to exposure to cold. It often happens when a person is outdoors in extremely cold weather without wearing proper clothing or when skin is wet and cold.
- As hypothermia sets in, the person may shiver and become lethargic and clumsy. His speech may become slurred and his body temperature will decline.
- If you suspect a person is hypothermic, call 911 at once. Until help arrives, take the person indoors, remove any wet clothing, and wrap them in blankets or warm clothes.

- **Frostbite**

- Frostbite happens when the skin and outer tissues become frozen. This condition tends to happen on extremities like the fingers, toes, ears and nose. They may become pale, gray and blistered. At the same time, the person may complain that their skin burns or has become numb.
- If frostbite occurs, bring the person indoors and warm the frostbitten parts of their body quickly in warm (not hot) water. 100° - 104° Fahrenheit (about the temperature of most hot tubs) is recommended. Warm washcloths may be applied to frostbitten nose, ears and lips.
- Do not rub the frozen areas.
- After a few minutes, dry and cover him with clothing or blankets. Give them something warm to drink.
- If the numbness continues for more than a few minutes, call your doctor.

- **Sunburn**

- The sun's rays can still cause sunburn in the winter, especially when they reflect off snow. Make sure to cover your exposed skin with sunscreen.

Additional Information

- FEMA, Are You Ready? Guide.
 - Available at <http://www.fema.gov/areyouready/index.shtm>.
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Extreme Cold: A Prevention Guide to Promote Your Personal Health and Safety.
 - Available at <http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/winter/guide.asp>.
- National Weather Service, Winter Storms... The Deceptive Killers.
 - Available at <http://www.nws.noaa.gov/om/brochures/wntrstm.htm>.
- American Red Cross
- Local Departments of Emergency Preparedness