



Are You Ready for Winter?

Get Supplies Together Now in Anticipation of Snow and Ice

With any luck, the approaching winter season won't be as nasty as the one many Pennsylvanians endured last year. Mother Nature, though, isn't known for her predictability. With that in mind, here are some tips from www.ready.gov, a Federal Emergency Management Agency preparedness campaign, to help you and your family get ready before the snow, ice, winds, and frigid temps come our way.

Before winter and storms arrive

To prepare for a winter storm, [ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov) recommends the following:

Stock up on the following supplies:

- 4 Rock salt or an alternative, environmentally safe product to melt ice on walkways.
- 4 Sand or other antiskid materials to improve traction on sidewalks and driveways.
- 4 Snow shovels and other snow removal equipment.
- 4 Heating fuel. You may become isolated in your home, and regular fuel sources may be cut off. Store a good supply of dry, seasoned wood for your fireplace or wood-burning stove.
- 4 Adequate clothing and blankets to keep you warm.

Create a "family communication plan." Your family may not be together when disaster strikes so it is important to know how you will contact one another, how you will get back together, and what you will do in case of an emergency. To learn more about developing a plan, go to www.ready.gov/family-communications.

Homeowners should consider purchasing a NOAA weather radio, which broadcasts alerts and warnings directly from the National Weather Service for all hazards. Many county emergency management organizations provide phone and text notifications, too. Check with them, and if they do, register your contact information.

Also, download FEMA's *Be Smart. Know Your Alerts and Warnings* for a summary of notifications at www.ready.gov/prepare. Free smart phone apps, such as those available from FEMA and the American Red Cross, provide information about finding shelters, providing first aid, and seeking recovery assistance. Minimize travel. If travel is necessary, keep a disaster supply kit in your vehicle. To learn more about what to include in this kit, visit www.ready.gov/kit-storage-locations.

Bring pets/companion animals inside during winter weather. Move other animals or livestock to sheltered areas with nonfrozen drinking water.

During a storm and extreme cold

Once a storm arrives or the temperatures dip to bone-chilling single digits, take the following steps:

Stay indoors as much as possible.

Walk carefully on snowy, icy walkways.

Avoid overexertion when shoveling snow. Overexertion can bring on a heart attack, a major cause of death in the winter. Use caution, take breaks, push the snow instead of lifting it when possible, and lift lighter loads.

Keep dry. Change wet clothing frequently to prevent a loss of body heat. Wet clothing loses all of its insulating value and transmits heat rapidly.

Signs of frostbite: Frostbite occurs when the skin and body tissue just beneath it freezes. Symptoms include loss of feeling and white or pale appearance in extremities, such as fingers, toes, earlobes, face, and the tip of the nose.

4 **What to do if you suspect frostbite:** Cover exposed skin but do not rub the affected area in an attempt to warm it up. Seek medical help immediately.

Signs of hypothermia: This is dangerously low body temperature that could lead to uncontrollable shivering, memory loss, disorientation, incoherence, slurred speech, drowsiness, and exhaustion.

4 **What to do if you suspect hypothermia:** If symptoms of hypothermia are detected, take the person's temperature. If it is below 95 degrees, seek medical attention immediately. Get the victim to a warm location. Remove wet clothing. Warm the center of the body first by wrapping the person in blankets or putting on dry clothing. Give warm, non-alcoholic beverages if the victim is conscious.

Drive only if it is absolutely necessary. If you must drive, travel during the day, don't travel alone, keep others informed of your schedule, and avoid back roads and shortcuts.

If the pipes freeze in your house, remove any insulation and wrap the pipes in rags. Open all faucets and pour hot water over the pipes, starting where they were exposed to the cold (*or where the cold was most likely to penetrate*).

Maintain ventilation when using kerosene heaters to avoid build-up of toxic fumes. Refuel kerosene heaters outside and keep them at least 3 feet from flammable objects.

If you will be going away during cold weather, leave the heat on in your home and don't set the temperature any lower than 55 degrees.

After a storm

Keep these things in mind after the snow, ice, and cold temperatures move on:

If your home loses power or heat for more than a few hours or if you do not have adequate supplies to stay warm there overnight, you may want to go to a designated public shelter if you can get there safely. Text **SHELTER** + your **ZIP code** to **43362 (4FEMA)** to find the nearest shelter in your area.

Bring personal items that you would need to spend the night (*such as toiletries and medicine*). Take precautions when traveling to the shelter. Dress warmly in layers and wear boots, mittens, and a hat.

Continue to protect yourself from frostbite and hypothermia by wearing warm, loose-fitting, lightweight clothing in several layers. Stay indoors if possible.

If you choose to stay in your home, never run a generator indoors or in an attached garage. Place the generator outside in a well-ventilated, dry area, away from air intakes to the home. Also, be sure to protect it from direct exposure to rain and snow.

Learn from every storm

When life returns to normal, consider the recent storm as a learning experience and do the following:

Restock your emergency supplies to be ready in case another storm hits.

Assess how well your supplies and family plan worked. What could you have done better?

