



Cold weather and winter storms can be deadly. The best way to keep yourself and your family safe and warm is to prepare your car, your house, stock up on emergency supplies and use common sense when participating in outdoor activities.

Prepare Your Car

Have your car winterized. Keeping your car in good working condition decreases the chances of being stranded in cold weather. Have a mechanic check the battery, antifreeze, brakes, tires, heater, defroster, wipers and wiper fluid and lights.

Put together a separate disaster kit for the trunk of each car in your family. Items to include are:

- Sand or cat litter for creating traction under tires
- Jumper cables
- Small shovel
- Flashlight with extra batteries
- Blanket or sleeping bag
- Dry mittens, socks, hat and scarf
- High-energy snack foods/bottled water
- First-aid kit
- Candle in a metal can or other fireproof container to be used as a heat and/or light source
- Matches

Plan long trips carefully. Travel during daylight when road conditions may be better and, if possible, don't travel alone. Let someone know your destination, your route and when you expect to arrive. If you get stranded, help can be sent along that route.

If you are stuck in your car:

- **Stay with your vehicle.** Don't leave to search for help unless it's visible within 100 yards. It's easy to become disoriented and confused in blowing snow.
- **Display a trouble sign to indicate you need help.** Hang a brightly colored cloth on the radio antenna.
- **Turn on the car's engine for about 10 minutes each hour.** Experts say that is enough to keep occupants warm, lowers the risk of carbon monoxide and conserves fuel.

- **Leave the overhead light on** when the engine is running so that you can be seen.
- **Do minor exercises to keep up circulation.** Try not to stay in one position to long.
- **If more than one person is in the car, take turns sleeping.** One of the first signs of hypothermia is sleepiness. If you aren't wakened periodically to raise temperature and circulation, you could freeze to death.
- **Keep a window that is away from the blowing wind slightly open to let in air.**
- **Drink fluids to avoid dehydration.** When people are dehydrated, they're more susceptible to the cold. Melt snow before using it for drinking water. Eating snow lowers your body temperature and increases your risk of hypothermia.

Severe Weather Driving Tips

- **Bridges and overpasses freeze first.** Slow down and avoid sudden changes in speed or direction.
- **Wipe off snow and ice** from the entire car: hood, roof, windows, lights, mirrors and license plate.
- **Keep your speed steady and slow** - but not too slow. In deep snow, it's often necessary to use the car's momentum to keep moving.
- **Use brakes cautiously.** Abrupt braking can cause brake lock-up, which causes you to lose control.
- **Anti-lock brakes are designed to overcome a loss of steering control.** Apply constant and firm pressure to the brake pedal. During an emergency, push the brake pedal all the way to the floor.
- **If you get stuck in snow,** straighten the wheels and accelerate slowly. Avoid spinning the tires. Use sand under the wheels to gain traction.
- **Drive with headlights on low beam.**
- **Avoid sudden starts, stops, or turns.**
- **Accelerate carefully so wheels don't spin.**

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Prepare Your Home

It's also important to winterize your home. You should:

- Caulk and weather-strip doors and windows.
- Install storm windows or cover windows with plastic from the inside.
- Have chimney and flue inspected.
- Have your furnace inspected.

Check and replace any items in your home disaster supplies kit. See

www.accesskent.com/Health/HealthDepartment/EmergencyPrep/Fact_Sheets.htm for fact sheets on what to include in your kit.

Install a carbon monoxide (CO) detector in your home.

Carbon monoxide is an odorless, colorless gas. People and animals can be poisoned by breathing it. It is found in the fumes from generators, stoves, faulty furnaces and burning charcoal and wood. Many people with CO poisoning mistake their symptoms for the flu. Because CO replaces oxygen in the blood, it can make people feel sleepy. Or, if they are asleep, it can prevent them from waking up.

Outdoor Safety

- **Babies and the elderly are more at risk from the cold** and should be kept warm. Everyone should dress warmly when going outside. Wear loose-fitting layered clothes. Wear mittens rather than gloves – mittens are warmer.
- **Watch for signs of frostbite** (feeling of pins and needles followed by numbness; skin may freeze hard and look white. When thawed out, skin is red and painful).
- **Watch for signs of hypothermia** (uncontrolled shivering; slow speech; memory loss; stumbling; sleepiness).

Safe Snowmobiling

Many snowmobile accidents are caused by excessive speed, inattentive or careless driving or inexperience. To prevent accidents, operators should:

- Wear a helmet
- Obey speed limits
- Take a snowmobile safety course
- Follow others at a safe distance

- Never drive under the influence of drugs or alcohol
- Drive only during the day if you are an inexperienced operator

Safe Ice Fishing

Each year thousands of people take to the frozen rivers and lakes to ice fish and each winter there are ice-related accidents often caused by poor judgment or poor decisions. To prevent accidents, fishermen should:

- Never fish alone.
- Leave information about their location and expected return time with a family member or friend.
- Be cautious crossing ice near river mouths, points of land, bridges and islands. Currents almost always cause ice to be thinner in these areas.
- Carry a personal flotation device.
- Have adequate ventilation in an ice shanty if using a portable heater to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning.
- Avoid alcoholic beverages. In addition to impairing judgment, alcohol causes the body to lose heat more quickly.
- Never go out onto partial ice conditions. Large sheets of ice can break away leaving a person stranded.
- Carry a set of hand spikes to help pull yourself out of the water if you fall through the ice.
- Carry a safety line that can be tossed to someone who has gone through the ice.
- Leave cars, trucks and snowmobiles on shore. People can drown if they are inside the vehicle when it goes through the ice.