

**The NWS calls winter storms “Deceptive Killers”. Most die from hypothermia from prolonged exposure to the cold.**

**Basic terms:**

**Winter Storm Watch:** Issued 12-36 hours in advance of a storm when forecasters believe the conditions are possible.

**Winter Storm Warning:** Issued 6-24 hours in advance and when a combination of heavy snow, freezing rain, or heavy sleet is expected.

**Blizzard Warning:** Issued for sustained winds of 35mph or greater, falling or blowing snow creating  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile or less visibilities and should persist for at least 3 hours.

**Winter Weather Advisories:** Issued for accumulations of snow, freezing rain, freezing drizzle, and sleet which will cause significant inconvenience and moderately dangerous conditions.

**Snow:** Frozen precipitation

**Snow Flurries:** Light snow falling for short durations. No accumulation or light dusting is all that is expected.

**Snow Showers:** Snow falling at varying intensities for brief periods of time. Some accumulation is possible.

**Blowing Snow:** Wind-driven snow that reduces visibility and causes significant drifting. Blowing snow may be snow that is falling and/or loose snow on the ground picked up by the wind.

**Sleet:** Rain drops that freeze into ice pellets before reaching the ground. Sleet usually bounces when hitting a surface and does not stick to objects. However, it can accumulate like snow and cause a hazard to motorists.

**Freezing Rain:** Rain that falls onto a surface with a temperature below freezing. This causes it to freeze to surfaces, such as trees, cars, and roads, forming a coating or glaze of ice. Even small accumulations of ice can cause a significant hazard.

## Precautionary Measures

### **BEFORE the storm**

Be familiar with winter storm terminology.

Have safe emergency heating equipment available.

- \* Fireplace with ample supply of wood
- \* Small, well-vented, wood, coal, or camp stove with fuel
- \* Portable space heaters or kerosene heaters
- \* Install and check smoke detectors.

Keep pipes from freezing.

- \* Wrap pipes in insulation or layers of old newspapers.
- \* Cover the newspapers with plastic to keep out moisture.

Let faucets drip a little to avoid freezing.

- \* Know how to shut off water valves.

Have disaster supplies on hand, in case the power goes out.

- \* Flashlight and extra batteries
- \* Portable, battery-operated radio and extra batteries.
- \* First aid kit
- \* One-week supply of food
- \* Non-electric can opener
- \* One-week supply of essential prescription medications.
- \* Extra blankets and sleeping bags
- \* Fire extinguisher (A-B-C type)

Develop an emergency communication plan.

In case family members are separated from one another during a winter storm (a real possibility during the day when adults are at work and children are at school), have a reunification plan.

Ask an out-of-state relative or friend to serve as the "family contact." After a disaster, it's often easier to call long distance. Make sure everyone knows the name, address, and phone number of the contact person.

Make sure that all family members know how to respond after a severe winter storm.

Teach children how and when to call 9-1-1, police, or fire department, and which radio station to tune to for emergency information.

## **DURING the storm**

### *IF INDOORS*

Stay indoors and dress warmly.

Conserve fuel.

Lower the thermostat to 65 degrees during the day and 55 degrees at night.

If the pipes freeze, remove any insulation or layers of newspapers and wrap pipes in rags.

Completely open all faucets and pour hot water over the pipes, starting where they were most exposed to the cold (or where the cold was most likely to penetrate). Listen to the radio or television to get the latest information.

Bring pets in if possible.

### *IF OUTDOORS*

Dress warmly and wear loose-fitting, layered, light-weight clothing. Layers can be removed to prevent perspiration and chill. Outer garments should be tightly woven and water repellant. Mittens are warmer than gloves because fingers generate warmth when they touch each other.

Stretch before you go out.

Take frequent breaks and cover your mouth while working. This will protect your lungs from extremely cold air. Try not to speak unless absolutely necessary.

Walk carefully on icy walkways.

Avoid overexertion. Cold weather puts an added strain on the heart. Unaccustomed exercise such as shoveling snow or pushing a car can bring on a heart attack or make other medical conditions worse.

Be aware of symptoms of dehydration (dry mouth, sleepiness).

Watch for signs of frostbite (painful or itching sensation, cold or burning feeling, numbness, blistering) and hypothermia (shivering, lack of coordination, drowsiness, slurred speech, confusion or memory loss, shallow breathing).

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.

Drive only if absolutely necessary. Let someone your leave time, destination and arrive time.

Remember to help your neighbors who may require special assistance--infants, elderly people, and people with disabilities.