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Risk Management Bulletin

Winter Storms Tips: Be Prepared Before the Storm Strikes

At Home and Work

Primary concerns are loss of heat, power and telephone service and a shortage of supplies if storm conditions continue for more than a day. Have available:

- Flashlight and extra batteries.
- Battery-powered National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Weather Radio and portable radio to receive emergency information. These may be your only links to the outside.
- Extra food and water. Have high energy food, such as dried fruit, nuts and granola bars, and food requiring no cooking or refrigeration.
- Extra medicine and baby items.
- First-aid supplies.
- Heating fuel. Refuel before you are empty. Fuel carriers may not reach you for days after a winter storm.
- Emergency heat source: fireplace, wood stove, space heater.
- Use properly to prevent a fire.
- Ventilate properly.
- Fire extinguisher, smoke alarm.
- Test smoke alarms once a month to ensure they work properly.
- Make sure pets have plenty of food, water and shelter.

In Vehicles

- Plan your travel and check the latest weather reports to avoid the storm.
- Fully check and winterize your vehicle before the winter season begins.
- Carry a winter storm survival kit:
 - Mobile phone, charger, batteries.
 - Blankets/sleeping bags.
 - Flashlight with extra batteries.
 - First-aid kit.
 - Knife.
 - High-calorie, non-perishable food.
 - Extra clothing to keep dry.
 - Large empty can to use as emergency toilet. Tissues and paper towels for sanitary purposes.
 - Small can and waterproof matches to melt snow for drinking water.
 - Sack of sand or cat litter for traction.
 - Shovel.
 - Windshield scraper and brush.
 - Tool kit.
 - Tow rope.
 - Battery booster cables.
 - Water container.

- Compass and road maps.
- Keep your gas tank near full to avoid ice in the tank and fuel lines.
- Avoid traveling alone.
- Let someone know your timetable and primary and alternate routes.

When Caught in a Winter Storm

- Find shelter:
 - Try to stay dry.
 - Cover all exposed body parts.
- No shelter:
 - Build a lean-to, windbreak or snow cave for protection from the wind.
 - Build a fire for heat and to attract attention.
 - Place rocks around the fire to absorb and reflect heat.
- Melt snow for drinking water: Eating snow will lower your body temperature.

In a Vehicle

- Stay in vehicle
- You will become quickly disoriented in wind-driven snow and cold.
- Run the motor about 10 minutes each hour for heat.
- Open the window a little for fresh air to avoid carbon monoxide poisoning.
- Make sure the exhaust pipe is not blocked.
- Be visible to rescuers:
 - Turn on the dome light at night when running the engine.
 - Tie a colored cloth, preferably red, to your antenna or door.
 - After snow stops falling, raise the hood to indicate you need help.
- Exercise: From time to time, move arms, legs, fingers and toes vigorously to keep blood circulating and to keep warm.

Inside

- Stay inside
- When using alternate heat from a fireplace, wood stove, space heater, etc., use fire safeguards and properly ventilate.
- No heat:
 - Close off unneeded rooms.
 - Stuff towels or rags in cracks under doors.
 - Cover windows at night.
- Eat and drink. Food provides the body with energy for producing its own heat. Keep the body replenished with fluids to prevent dehydration.
- Wear layers of loose-fitting, lightweight, warm clothing. Remove layers to avoid overheating, perspiration and subsequent chill.

These tips are from the National Weather Service. For more information on winter storm safety and awareness, go to <http://www.weather.gov/os/winter/index.shtml>.
