



Cold-Weather Preparedness For Your Community



The coming winter months hold the possibility of icy roads, downed power lines and snow drifts. People throughout the Midwestern United States have already experienced power failures and dangerously cold temperatures this year. Residents of cold-weather states should prepare now for winter emergencies and disasters.

"Every family and business should be ready for the unexpected throughout the year," said Lynn Pharr, Director of Crisis Preparedness, Response & Recovery for United Way of America. "Now is the time for many of us to focus on cold weather, power outages, winter fire safety and snowstorms."

Simple steps to becoming disaster ready include getting an emergency supply kit, making a communication plan and listening to local instructions.

- An emergency supply kit includes, among other things, essential items to last at least three days such as a battery-powered radio and extra batteries, food and water, flashlights, a first aid kit, blankets and medications.
- Making a communication plan involves discussing the hazards and threats for your area and what your family would do during an actual emergency. As you create your plan, decide on a meeting place if your family cannot return home, designate an out-of-town friend or relative as a point-of-contact and plan for the specific needs of your household, such as an evacuation shelter for pets or transportation for medical equipment.
- Before, during and after a disaster, it is critical that you listen for the most local, up-to-date information from emergency officials. Local media will convey instructions from local, state and federal government partners, such as details about evacuation orders, how to safely stay where you are and when the emergency has passed.

Winter fire safety tips:

- Plug space heaters directly into wall sockets and keep them at least three feet from other objects. Do not leave them unattended.

- Install a smoke detector in every bedroom and one on every level of your home. Check the batteries monthly and replace them annually.
- Clean out dryer vents and be sure they are not blocked.
- If you lose power for a prolonged time, evacuate your home instead of trying to heat it by unconventional methods such as turning on stoves powered by natural gas.
- For detailed winter fire safety tips, go to:
www.usfa.fema.gov/downloads/pdf/publications/l-97.pdf.

Additional winter tips:

- Make sure that outdoor pets have adequate shelter, unfrozen water and food.
- Driving is most dangerous when the temperature is at or under 32° F. If the road is wet, ice is likely, especially on bridges, ramps and overpasses.
- Even when roads have been treated with salt and/or sand, drivers should reduce their speed and leave a safe driving distance between themselves and other vehicles on the road.
- For special safety tips regarding children's winter activities, go to:
<http://www.hotelfun4kids.com/travelsafetytips/wintersafety.htm#WINTER%20SAFETY>.



To access weather forecasts and warnings for your state from NOAA/National Weather Service, go to <http://weather.noaa.gov/>.