

Winter storms – Snowstorms and Extreme Cold

When the Sky Turns Gray, Animated Video (1:30)

Winter storms create a higher risk of car accidents, hypothermia, frostbite, carbon monoxide poisoning, and heart attacks from overexertion. Winter storms and blizzards can bring extreme cold, freezing rain, snow, ice, and high winds. Winter storms can last a few hours or several days and knock out power, heat, and communication services. Winter storms place older adults and young children to greater risk of injury.

HOW TO STAY SAFE WHEN A WINTER STORM THREATENS:

Prepare NOW

- Know your area's risk for winter storms. Extreme winter weather can leave communities without utilities or other services for long periods of time.
- Prepare your home to keep out the cold with insulation, caulking, and weather stripping. Learn how to keep pipes from freezing. Install and test smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors with battery backups.
- Pay attention to weather reports and warnings of freezing weather and winter storms. Sign up for your community's warning system. The Emergency Alert System (EAS) and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Weather Radio also provide emergency alerts.
- Gather supplies in case you need to stay home for several days without power. Keep in mind each person's specific needs, including medication. Do not forget the needs of pets. Have extra batteries for radios and flashlights.
- Create an emergency supply kit for your car: Include jumper cables, sand, a flashlight, warm clothes, blankets, bottled water, and non-perishable snacks. Keep the gas tank full.
- Learn the signs of, and basic treatments for, frostbite and hypothermia.

Survive DURING

- Stay off roads if at all possible. If trapped in your car, then stay inside.
- Limit your time outside. If you need to go outside, then wear layers of warm clothing. Watch for signs of frostbite and hypothermia.
- Avoid carbon monoxide poisoning. Only use generators and grills outdoors and away from windows. Never heat your home with a gas stovetop or oven.
- Reduce the risk of a heart attack. Avoid overexertion when shoveling snow.
- Check on neighbors. Older adults and young children are more at risk in extreme cold.
- Watch for signs of frostbite and hypothermia and begin treatment right away.
 - Signs of **frostbite**: Numbness, white or grayish-yellow skin, firm or waxy skin
 - Treatment for **frostbite**: Go to a warm room. Soak in warm water. Use body heat to warm. Do not massage or use a heating pad.
 - Signs of **hypothermia**: Shivering, exhaustion, confusion, fumbling hands, memory loss, slurred speech, or drowsiness
 - Treatment for **hypothermia**: Go to a warm room. Warm the center of the body first—chest, neck, head, and groin. Keep dry and wrapped up in warm blankets, including the head and neck.

Thunderstorms & Lightning

Lightning is a leading cause of injury and death from weather-related hazards. Although most lightning victims survive, people struck by lightning often report a variety of long-term, debilitating symptoms. Thunderstorms are dangerous storms that include lightning and powerful winds over 50 MPH. Thunderstorms can create hail and cause flash flooding and tornadoes.

HOW TO STAY SAFE WHEN A THUNDERSTORM THREATENS:

Prepare NOW

- Know your area's risk for thunderstorms. In most places, they can occur year-round and at any hour.
- Sign up for your community's warning system. The Emergency Alert System (EAS) and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Weather Radio also provide emergency alerts.
- Identify nearby, sturdy buildings close to where you live, work, study, and play.
- Cut down or trim trees that may be in danger of falling on your home.
- Consider buying surge protectors, lightning rods, or a lightning protection system to protect your home, appliances, and electronic devices.

Survive DURING

- **When thunder roars, go indoors.** A sturdy building is the safest place to be during a thunderstorm.
- Pay attention to weather reports and warnings of thunderstorms. Be ready to change plans, if necessary, to be near shelter.
- When you receive a thunderstorm warning or hear thunder, go inside immediately.
- If indoors, avoid running water or using landline phones. Electricity can travel through plumbing and phone lines.
- Protect your property. Unplug appliances and other electric devices. Secure outside furniture.
- If boating or swimming, get to land and find a sturdy, grounded shelter or vehicle immediately.
- If necessary, take shelter in a car with a metal top and sides. Do not touch anything metal.
- Avoid flooded roadways. Turn Around. Don't Drown! Just six inches of fast-moving water can knock you down, and one foot of moving water can sweep your vehicle away.

Be Safe AFTER

- Listen to authorities and weather forecasts for information on whether it is safe to go outside and instructions regarding potential flash flooding.
- Watch for fallen power lines and trees. Report them immediately.

Power Outages

Subway Power Outage, PSA (:30)

Extended power outages may impact the whole community and the economy. A power outage is when the electrical power goes out unexpectedly anytime, any season. May close grocery stores, gas stations, retail businesses, ATM's, and banks. May cause food spoilage and water contamination. Can prevent use of medical devices. May also disrupt communications, water, and transportation.

During a power outage:

- Keep freezers and refrigerator doors closed. The refrigerator will keep food cold for about 4 hours. The freezer will keep its temperature for about 48 hours. Use coolers with ice if necessary and monitor temperatures with a thermometer.
- Use food supplies that do not require refrigeration.
- Avoid carbon monoxide poisoning. *Generators, camp stoves, or charcoal grills should always be used outdoors* and 20 feet away from windows. Never use a gas stovetop or oven to heat your home.
- Go to a community location with power if heat or cold are extreme.
- Turn off or disconnect appliances, equipment, or electronics. Power may return with momentary “surges” or “spikes” that can cause damage.

Be safe when the power comes back on:

- *When in doubt, throw it out!* Throw away any food that has been exposed to temperatures over 40 degrees or higher for two or more hours or that has an unusual odor, color, or texture.
- If the power has been out for more than a day, discard any medication that should be refrigerated unless the drugs label says otherwise. If a life depends on the refrigerated medications then consult a doctor or pharmacist.