

IT'S TIME TO PREPARE FOR WINTER WEATHER

Every year, Nova Scotia averages at least five major winter storms that impact thousands of people. The best time to prepare for winter's snow, cold and ice is before such weather hits. Being prepared for winter doesn't have to cost a lot of money or take a lot of time. It could be as simple as making sure your vehicle is in good winter driving condition, adding a winter survival kit to your car, changing your furnace filter and stocking or updating a home emergency supply kit.

Preparing for winter also means adjusting your driving habits. Snowy or ice-coated roads and reduced visibility due to fog or blowing snow result in thousands of motor vehicle crashes every year. Many of these can be avoided by simply slowing down on city streets, rural roads and highways. Recent traffic studies have shown that many times, minor accumulations of snow or ice on roads can be just as dangerous for motorists as major snowstorms.

Use this Winter Weather Preparedness Guide to help you and your family prepare for and stay safe during winter weather. It includes information about winter travel safety guidelines, winter weather terminology and tips on how to prepare your home and vehicle for winter storms. Take time now to prepare your family, home, vehicles and driving habits for everything from a dusting of snow to a major winter storm.

WINTERIZE YOUR HOME

Winterize your home to extend your fuel supply.

- Insulate walls and attics.
- Caulk and weatherize doors and windows.
- Install storm windows or cover windows with plastic.



PREPARE YOUR VEHICLE FOR THE WINTER

- Winterize your vehicle or have your vehicle serviced by a reputable dealer, garage or mechanic.
- Check your wipers, tires, lights and fluid levels regularly. Make sure the brakes and transmission are working properly. Lubricate door and trunk locks to prevent them from freezing.
- Prepare a Winter Storm Survival Kit and carry it in your vehicle. A kit is important even for short trips. If you have an accident or vehicle breakdown, you may be waiting several hours for assistance to arrive.

TAKE STEPS TO PREVENT FROZEN WATER PIPES

- Locate and insulate the pipes most susceptible to freezing: typically those near outer walls, in crawl spaces or in attics.
- Heat tape or thermostatically controlled heat cables can be used to wrap pipes. Be sure to use products approved by an independent testing organization, such as Underwriters Laboratories Inc., and only for the use intended (exterior or interior). Closely follow all manufacturers' installation and operation instructions.
- Seal any leaks that allow cold air inside where pipes are located.
- Disconnect garden hoses and shut off and drain water from pipes leading to outside faucets.
- Make sure you know how to shut off the water, in case pipes burst.

PREPARE FOR POSSIBLE ISOLATION IN YOUR HOME FOR SEVERAL DAYS

- Make sure you have sufficient heating fuel. After a severe winter storm, regular fuel carriers may not reach you for days.
- Have emergency heating equipment (fireplaces, wood burning stoves or space heaters) and ample fuel so you can keep at least one room of your house warm. Always ensure proper ventilation to avoid carbon monoxide poisoning.
- NEVER use an outdoor grill to heat your home or to cook food indoors.
- Keep fire extinguishers on hand and make sure your family knows how to use them.

WINTER STORM SURVIVAL KIT FOR TRAVELERS

- Cell phone and charger
- Blankets/sleeping bags
- Flashlight with extra batteries
- First-aid kit
- Knife
- High calorie, non-perishable food
- Water
- Extra clothing to keep dry
- A large empty can and plastic cover with tissues and paper towels for sanitary purposes
- A smaller can and water-proof matches to melt snow for drinking water

- Water Container
- Tool kit
- Sack of sand (or cat litter)
- Shovel
- Windshield scraper and brush
- Tow rope with loops (avoid chains and hooks if at all possible)
- Booster Cables
- GPS, compass and/or road maps



DURING WINTER STORMS AND EXTREME COLD

WHEN AT HOME

- Stay indoors in a heated room as much as possible.
- Hang blankets over windows at night, but let the sun shine in during the day. Cover cracks around doors with rugs, newspapers, towels or other such material.
- When using alternative heat from a fireplace, wood stove, space heater, propane device etc., use safeguards and ensure proper ventilation to avoid carbon monoxide poisoning.
- If you need to refuel any containers, do so outside and keep them at least three feet away from flammable objects.
- If you have no heat, close off unneeded rooms and place towels or rags under the doors.
- If your water pipes freeze:
 - * Shut off water at the main source. This can minimize the damage to your home.
 - * Call a plumber and contact your insurance agent.
 - * Always be aware of the potential for electric shock in and around standing water
 - * Never try to thaw a frozen pipe with an open flame or torch.

WHEN OUTSIDE

Avoid overexertion, such as shoveling heavy snow, pushing a car or walking in deep snow. The strain from the cold and the hard labor of snow shoveling could cause a heart attack at any age – a major cause of death in the winter. Don't ignore chest pain or tightness in your chest.

- If you become stranded outdoors, seek shelter to stay dry. Cover all exposed parts of the body.
- If no shelter is nearby, prepare a lean-to, windbreak or snow cave for protection from the wind. Build a fire for heat and to attract attention.
- Do not eat snow as it will lower your body temperature. Melt it first.
- Watch for signs of frostbite and hypothermia.
- Frostbite is a severe reaction to cold exposure of the skin that can permanently damage fingers, toes, the nose and ear lobes. Symptoms are numbness and a white or pale appearance to the skin. When symptoms are apparent, seek medical help immediately. If medical help is not immediately available, slowly warm the affected areas.
- Hypothermia, or low body temperature, is a life-threatening condition brought on when the body temperature falls below 95 degrees. Symptoms of hypothermia include slow or slurred speech, incoherence, memory loss, disorientation, uncontrollable shivering, drowsiness, repeated stumbling and apparent exhaustion. If these symptoms are detected, take the person's temperature. If below 95 degrees, immediately seek medical attention. If medical help is not available, begin warming the person slowly. Always warm the body core first. Do NOT warm the arms and legs first – this can force the cold blood toward the heart and can lead to heart failure. Get the person into dry clothing, and wrap them in a warm blanket covering the head and neck. Do not give the victim alcohol, drugs, coffee or any hot beverage. Warm broth is better.

WHEN TRAVELING

If you decide a trip cannot be delayed, consider using public transportation if it is available. If you decide to drive your vehicle, take the following precautions:

BEFORE YOU LEAVE

- * Check latest weather conditions along your planned travel route. Listen to weather forecasts on TV and local radio stations
- * Check your wipers, tires, lights and fluid levels. Lubricate door and trunk locks with lock lubricant to prevent freezing. Start with a full tank of gas.
- * Travel during daylight hours on main roads and don't travel alone.
- * Carry a Winter Storm Survival Kit in your vehicle.
- * Provide your itinerary to a friend, relative or co-worker. Include information on your destination, the routes you will travel and when you expect to arrive. When you reach your destination, make a call to report that you have arrived.

ON THE ROAD

- * Buckle your seat belts!
- * Be prepared to turn back and seek shelter if conditions become threatening.
- * Keep your windows clear of snow and ice. Do not start driving until your windshield is defrosted.
- * Drive slow and increase your following distance. Your speed should be adjusted for the conditions and match flow of traffic.
- * Only use a cell phone if you are safely over to the side of the road or in a parking lot. Never talk on a cell phone while driving. This is especially dangerous in winter weather conditions.
- * Roadway conditions may vary depending on the sun, shade or roadway surface. Watch for slick spots especially under bridges, on overpasses and in shaded areas.
- * If the pavement is snow or ice covered, start slowly and brake gently. Begin braking early when you come to an intersection. If you start to slide, ease off the gas pedal or brakes. Steer into the direction of the skid until you feel you have regained traction, and then straighten your vehicle.
- * If your vehicle becomes stuck in the snow, contact a towing company, but be prepared to wait in the cold weather for up to several hours. If you can be safely pulled out by another vehicle, make sure you use tow ropes with loops on the ends. Avoid chains or hooks if at all possible, since these can slip off and recoil very quickly, causing injury or death.
- * When a snowplow is coming toward you, allow plenty of room for the truck to pass. When the center line is being cleared and salted, the plow tip may be on or over the line.
- * When you approach a snowplow from behind, pass with care and only when you can see the road ahead of the truck. You should not try to pass in blowing snow; there may be a vehicle in that cloud of snow. Allow more distance than usual between you and the plow.
- * Refuel often, keeping your gas tank near full to prevent ice in the tank and fuel lines, which could leave you stranded. These frequent stops should also help relieve tense muscles.

RECOMMENDED WINTER ATTIRE

- * Wear loose fitting, lightweight, warm clothing in several layers. The trapped air between the layers insulates. Layers can be removed to avoid perspiration and subsequent chill.
- * Wear outer garments that are tightly woven, water repellent and hooded.
- * Wear a hat. A significant amount of body heat is lost through the top of the head.
- * Wear mittens that are snug at the wrist. Mittens offer better protection. Gloves allow your fingers to cool much faster than mittens.
- * Cover the mouth and nose with scarves to help protect lungs from cold air.
- * Keep your feet as dry as possible. Wear wool socks.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU GET STRANDED

- Pull as far off the road as possible, set your hazard lights to "flashing," and hang or tie a colored cloth (preferably red) to your antenna, window or door. After the snow stops falling, raise the hood to indicate trouble. If you have a cell phone, call for help.
- Stay in your vehicle, where rescuers are most likely to find you. Do not set out on foot unless you can see a building close by where you know you can take shelter.
- Make sure the exhaust pipe is not blocked by snow, and then run the engine and heater about 10 minutes each hour to keep warm. Turn on the dome light at night when running the engine. When the engine is running, open a window slightly for ventilation. Periodically clear away snow from the exhaust pipe.
- Exercise to keep blood circulating and to maintain body heat by vigorously moving arms, legs, fingers and toes. In extreme cold, or if you don't have a Winter Storm Survival Kit, use road maps, seat covers and floor mats for insulation.
- Take turns sleeping. One person should be awake at all times to watch for rescue crews.
- Be careful not to deplete battery power. Balance electrical energy needs such as lights, heat and radio, with electrical energy supply.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Contact EMO Coordinator at 902-867-7152

Or visit:

<http://www.redcross.ca/how-we-help/emergencies-and-disasters-in-canada>

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