

ACTION MESSAGES

Be Prepared for a Winter Storm Protect Yourself

CORE ACTION MESSAGES

- Install and maintain smoke and carbon monoxide alarms.
- Keep cold-weather clothing, supplies, and equipment ready.
- Inspect heating equipment and have it serviced as needed.

For general preparedness, every household should create and practice a Family Disaster Plan and assemble and maintain a Disaster Supplies Kit. In addition, every household should take specific precautions and make specific plans for cold weather.

If you live in an area where severe winter weather is possible, you should:

Talk with members of your household about what to do if a winter storm watch or warning is issued. Discussing winter storms ahead of time helps reduce fear and helps everyone know how to respond during a winter storm.

- **Install smoke alarms.** For new homes, interconnected smoke alarms are required on every level of the home, outside each sleeping area and inside each bedroom. Although this approach is ideal for all homes, as a minimum, existing homes should have smoke alarms on every level and outside each sleeping area. Test and maintain them according to the manufacturer's instructions. (See Appendix: Smoke Alarms.)
- **Install carbon monoxide (CO) alarms following the manufacturer's instructions.** It is especially important to have one near sleeping areas. Test and maintain them according to the manufacturer's instructions. (See Appendix: Carbon Monoxide Alarms.)
- **Get training.** Take an American Red Cross first aid course to learn how to treat exposure to the cold, frostbite, and hypothermia.
- **Service snow removal equipment before the winter storm season and maintain it in good working order.**
- **Keep your vehicle's gas tank full** so you can leave right away in an emergency and to keep the fuel line from freezing.
- **Keep a supply of non-clumping kitty litter** to make walkways and steps less slippery. Kitty litter temporarily improves traction on an icy surface. Rock salt melts ice on walkways, but it can damage vegetation and concrete. You may find other, less damaging, ice-melting products at building supplies stores.
- **Keep handy a warm coat, gloves or mittens, hat, water-resistant boots, and extra blankets and warm clothing for each member of the household.**
- **Make sure your home heating sources are installed according to local codes and permit requirements and are clean and in working order.** Many home fires are started by poorly maintained furnaces or stoves, cracked or rusted furnace parts, or chimneys with creosote buildup.
- **Be sure all portable and fixed electric space heaters have been certified by an independent testing laboratory.** Keep blankets, clothing, curtains, furniture, and anything that could get hot and catch fire at least three feet away from all heat sources.