

Be Aware and Prepare: Winter Storms

Winter storms may be more dangerous than you realize. Dozens of Americans die every year because of exposure to cold and other winter storm conditions. Storms can last for days, knocking down power lines, communications towers and trees. Heavy accumulations of ice and snow, especially on roofs, can damage buildings. Without power, many people have no sources of heat, and their plumbing may be frozen. Prolonged exposure to frigid temperatures is especially dangerous for the elderly and infants. Homes and farms can be isolated for days; unprotected livestock can die. Sudden thaws can lead to significant flooding. Being aware and prepared includes understanding the threats and taking actions to protect your family members and friends, companion animals, livestock and properties. You should be prepared to be self-sufficient for three days or more, depending on where you live. Those living in rural and more remote areas may be on their own for longer periods of time. Know that the aftermath of winter storms may last for months.

Be Aware. Stay Aware.

- Get and use a NOAA all-hazards weather radio that broadcasts official National Weather Service forecasts, watches, warnings and other hazard information 24/7.
- Watch your local news or listen to local radio broadcasts to know what is expected and when.

Plan and Prepare.

- Put together an emergency plan. You can find an easy-to-use Make A Plan planning tool at www.ready.gov/make-a-plan.
- Assemble an emergency kit. Include water (1 gallon/day/person), at least three days' worth of nonperishable food, first aid supplies and prescription medicines, flashlights, battery powered radio, clothing, blankets, insect repellent, personal hygiene supplies, cash, credit cards, emergency contacts and phone numbers. Make provisions for livestock. Keep rock salt and sand on hand.
- Have extra blankets and sleeping bags available, in case you lose power. Stay in one room as much as possible and dress as warmly as you can. If you must use alternative heat sources (like a fireplace or gas heater), make sure it is ventilated to the outside. Do not use charcoal briquettes or grills inside your house.
- Keep a full tank of gas, blankets, shovel and emergency food in your car, but stay off the roads if you can. If you must drive, let someone know your destination, the route you are taking, and when you expect to arrive.
- If you get stuck in your car, stay with the car. Do not try to walk to safety. Making sure the exhaust pipe is clear, start the car and use the heater for about 10 minutes an hour. Leave a window cracked to let in air. Move your arms and legs to keep your circulation moving and to stay warmer.
- Stay inside as much as you can. If you must go outside, wear layers of clothing instead of a single heavy coat; this will keep you warmer and drier. Wear gloves or mittens, hats and scarves to prevent loss of body heat.

For more information:

www.aragriculture.org/disaster/ice_snow/ice_snow_cold_toc.pdf

Part of a disaster preparation series from the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture Community and Economic Development Department of the Cooperative Extension Service.



The University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture offers its programs to all eligible persons regardless of race, color, national origin, religion, gender, age, disability, marital or veteran status, or any other legally protected status, and is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer.