



Safety Tips for Winter

The winter season offers many opportunities for outdoor activities. But the same snow and cold weather that can be the source of outdoor fun can cause hypothermia, power outages, and unsafe road conditions. Careful planning can minimize the hazards of winter weather, while maximizing the fun of winter!

PREPARE YOURSELF

- Carefully select and maintain sporting equipment. Don't use damaged or improperly sized equipment.
- Check the weather before you embark on an outdoor activity. Have a backup plan prepared in case conditions suddenly change.
- Find a partner for activities that may take you off the beaten path, such as cross-country skiing. For activities that you perform alone, such as winter walks, let someone know where you are going and when you plan to return. If possible, carry a cell phone.
- Use extra precautions near frozen ponds and waterways.
- Pack snacks and drinks (non-alcoholic).
- Dress appropriately. Wear several layers of clothing and a hat to prevent both frostbite and hypothermia. Mittens are warmer than gloves.
- Avoid over-exertion during snow shoveling, which can result in heart failure and lower back injuries. Use a lightweight shovel. Push snow rather than lift it where possible. If lifting is required, don't overload the shovel and use your legs, not your back, to lift.

PREPARE YOUR HOME

- At the beginning of winter, shut off water to all unheated portions of the home and to outdoor faucets to avoid freezing pipes. If a pipe freezes, shut off the water valve and thaw the pipe slowly.
- Have snow blowers serviced and in proper working order before winter. Store fuel in approved containers.
- Keep sufficient food in the house that can be consumed in the event of a prolonged power failure. If you have an electric pump for your water supply, keep several gallons of water in containers.
- Have a flashlight and candles available for power failures. A battery-powered radio can also be helpful.
- If you lose heat, place blankets or towels at the doors and windows to try to keep cold air out. Wrap yourself in a warm blanket. During long outages, contact neighbors or friends to see if you can stay with them.
- If using a wood-burning stove or fireplace, have the chimney cleaned at least annually.
- Never discard hot ashes and coals near the home. Make sure they are in a covered metal container.
- Keep portable heaters away from curtains, beds, clothes, and children. Use on a secure level surface with at least three feet clearance on all sides.
- Install a carbon monoxide alarm to alert you to improper venting of furnaces, chimneys, gas water heaters, etc.

PREPARE YOUR CAR

- Have the following items available in the car: blanket, shovel, flashlight with extra batteries, jumper cables, ice scraper, and cat litter or sand (to provide traction on ice).
- Take snacks with you. Chocolate and power bars keep well even when frozen.
- Keep extra clothing in the car. Make sure that everyone has appropriate footwear (boots).
- Maintain at least a half tank of gas. Be sure the car has adequate antifreeze and that the tires are in good condition and properly inflated.
- Give yourself plenty of time to get to your destination and don't do unnecessary driving in poor weather. Driving at high speeds on icy roads is dangerous.
- If you get stuck, tie a brightly colored cloth to your antenna for rescuers to see. Stay with your car. Start the car and use the heater for about ten minutes each hour. Keep the exhaust pipe clear so fumes won't back up into the car and leave one window slightly open to provide fresh air. Leave the overhead light on when the engine is running so that you can be seen. Move your legs and arms to keep warm.