

OKLAHOMANS URGED TO BE WINTER WEATHER PREPARED

With winter weather comes the need to prepare your home, automobile and family to deal with the colder temperatures, as well as the possibility for snow and ice.

Always heed the advice of law enforcement and transportation officials when it comes to driving in inclement weather. If you must travel despite slick roads, make sure you and your automobile are prepared. Packing blankets, emergency food and water, flashlights, a radio and cell phone with extra batteries will help you and your family, should you become stranded because of the weather.

It's also important to remember to protect your home. Adding weather stripping and insulation, keeping furnaces clean and ready to use, and being aware of cold temperatures and vulnerable pipes that might freeze mark just some of the actions that can help prevent major and costly winter weather-related damage.

Oklahomans are also urged to monitor media and have a NOAA weather radio. Winter weather watches and warnings are issued by the National Weather Service on NOAA weather radios and over radio and television stations so that Oklahomans can stay aware of any hazardous conditions that may arise.

Every home, school and business in Oklahoma should use a weather radio as a way to get immediate life-saving warnings and information around the clock. Not only can you get the latest weather warnings and forecasts, but weather radios can also give you life-saving information on a variety of non-weather related emergencies. Today's weather radio is truly an all-hazards tool and should be a part of everyone's disaster readiness kit. Below are some winter weather preparedness tips.

Be Aware

- Know what winter storm and blizzard watches and warnings mean.
- An NWS Winter Storm watch is a message indicating that conditions are favourable to a winter storm.
- An NWS warning indicates that a winter storm is occurring or is imminent.
- A blizzard warning means sustained winds or frequent gusts to 35 mph or greater and considerable falling or blowing snow are expected to prevail for a period of three hours or longer.
- Depend on your NOAA Weather Radio, along with local radio and television stations for weather reports.

Plan for a Winter Storm

- Develop a Family Disaster Plan for winter storms. Discuss with your family what to do if a winter storm watch or warning is issued. Everyone should know what to do in case all family members are not together when a winter storm hits.
- Check on family, friends and neighbors, especially the elderly. Make sure they are prepared.
- Don't forget about the pets. Make sure they have good food and water supplies and a place to seek shelter.
- Have your car winterized before winter storm season. During winter storm season keep your car's gas tank full for emergency use and to keep the fuel line from freezing.

Protect Your Property

- Make sure your home is properly insulated. If necessary insulate walls and attic. Caulk and weather-strip doors and windowsills.
- Install storm windows or cover windows with plastic from the inside.

- To keep pipes from freezing, wrap them in insulation or layers of old newspapers. Cover the newspapers with plastic to keep out moisture.
- Let faucets drip a little to avoid freezing.
- Know how to shut off water valves.
- Consider storing extra heating fuel.
- Install and check smoke alarms.
- Keep safe emergency-heating equipment, such as a fireplace with wood. Always be cautious in using a portable space heater.

If You Must Go Out During a Winter Storm:

- The best way to stay safe in a snowstorm is not to be out in it. Long periods of exposure to severe cold can result in frostbite or hypothermia. It is easy to become disoriented in blowing snow.
- Stretch before you do so. If you go out to shovel snow, do a few stretching exercises to warm up your body. This will reduce your chances of muscle injury.
- Avoid overexertion, such as shovelling heavy snow, pushing a car or walking in deep snow.
- Walk carefully on snowy, icy sidewalks. Slips and falls occur frequently in winter weather, resulting in painful and sometimes disabling injury.
- Dress in many layers and wear a hat and mittens.
- Come inside often for warm-up breaks.
- If you start to shiver or get very tired, or if your nose, fingers, toes, or ear lobes start to feel numb or turn very pale, come inside right away and seek medical assistance. These are the signs of hypothermia and frostbite and need immediate attention.
- Let someone know your destination, your route and when you expect to arrive.
- If you get stranded, stay with your vehicle and hang a brightly colored cloth (preferably red) on the radio antenna and raise the hood (after snow stops falling)

Make sure your Winter Storm Disaster Supply Kit includes:

- A cell phone with extra battery or two-way radio
- Windshield scraper and small broom for ice and snow removal
- Several blankets or sleeping bags
- Rain gear and extra sets of dry clothing, mittens, socks and a cap
- Non-perishable snacks like canned fruit, nuts and other high energy “munchies.” Include non-electric can opener if necessary.
- Several bottles of water. Eating snow will lower your body temperature. If necessary, melt it first.
- A small sack of sand or kitty litter for generating traction under wheels, a set of tire chains or traction mats.
- Jumper cables
- A first aid kit
- A flashlight with extra batteries
- A brightly colored cloth to tie to the antenna if you get stranded.