

Severe winter storms

Staggering winter storm statistics show that 70 percent of winter storm deaths are automobile related. One-fourth of winter storm fatalities are the result of individuals being caught in the storm and more than 50 percent of these deaths are males.

Blinding wind-driven snow, extreme cold, icy roads, avalanches and downed trees and power lines can all accompany winter storms. Communication lines can be cut off, and access to emergency and medical services may be severely limited once extreme weather hits a region. It's important to know what to do before, during, and after a winter storm:

Before...

- Have your car winterized. This includes quality winter tires.
- Prepare a [family disaster supplies kit](#). Families with children should have each child create their own personal pack.
- Establish an out-of-area contact (such as a relative or family friend) who can coordinate family members' locations and information should you become separated. Make sure children learn the phone numbers and addresses, and know the emergency plans.
- Prepare your home for the winter months. Install storm windows and shutters and insulate attics and walls. Caulk and weather-strip doors and windows and wrap pipes with insulation. Learn how to disconnect gas, water, and electric power in case you must evacuate your home.

During... A winter storm watch means conditions are right for a severe storm to develop within 36 to 48 hours. Avoid going outside or traveling -- the safest place to be during a winter storm is indoors. During a winter storm watch:

- Listen to the radio or TV for the latest weather information.
- Review your family's disaster plan.
- Watch for changing weather conditions.
- Move any pets or other animals to a sheltered area (make sure they have water).

A winter storm warning means a life-threatening severe winter storm has begun or will begin within 24 hours. A blizzard warning is issued when conditions are likely to produce deep drifts, life-threatening wind chills, and blinding snowfall. During a winter storm or blizzard warning:

- Listen for news and weather updates.
- Dress in many layers.
- Implement your disaster plan regarding food, water and supplies if you are unable to go out for a prolonged period.
- To conserve fuel, lower the thermostat to 65°F during the day and 55°F at night.
- If power goes out, you may be forced to find other means of keeping warm during the storm. Use only safe emergency heat sources, such as a fireplace with a sturdy metal screen and a supply of wood; a well-vented wood, coal, or camp stove; a portable space heater. Read [NFPA's heating fact sheet](#) for more information on safe home heating.

After... Use common sense before going outside after a storm. Dress warmly in many layers, and always wear a hat. Protect your lungs by covering your mouth. Stretch before shoveling heavy snow and remember to take breaks to avoid overexertion. Continue to listen to the news and weather updates.

Date source: NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration)