

# Winter Weather

## PREPAREDNESS



Winter storms are deceptive killers since most of the deaths that occur are indirectly related to the actual storm.

### Winter Weather Facts:

- People die in traffic accidents on icy roads
- People die of heart attacks while shoveling snow
- People die of hypothermia from prolonged exposure to the cold

Monitor weather reports so that adequate preparation can be made to lessen the impact of severe weather conditions.

### Winter weather terms of the National Weather Service

**Blizzard Warning:** Issued when snow and strong winds will combine to produce blinding snow (visibilities near zero/white-outs), deep snow drifts, and life-threatening wind chill.

**Wind Chill:** What the temperature feels like to the human body based on both air temperature and wind speed.

**Wind Chill Advisory:** Issued when potentially dangerous wind chill readings (-20 to -34 degrees Fahrenheit) are expected.

**Wind Chill Watch:** Issued when life-threatening wind chill readings (-35 degrees Fahrenheit or lower) are possible.

**Wind Chill Warning:** Issued when wind chill readings (-35 degrees or lower) are expected to be life-threatening.

**Winter Weather Advisory:** Issued when winter conditions (snow, sleet, and/or freezing rain/ice) are expected to cause significant inconvenience and may be hazardous.

**Winter Storm Watch:** Issued when severe winter conditions (heavy snow and/or significant freezing rain/ice) are possible within the next day or two.

**Winter Storm Warning:** Issued when severe winter conditions have begun or are about to begin in your area. Six (6) inches or more of snow and/or ice accumulations of 1/4 inch or more.

### COLD RELATED INJURIES . . .

- ❄ **Frostbite:** Damage to body tissue caused by that tissue being frozen. Warning signs include loss of feeling and a white or pale appearance in extremities, such as fingers, toes, ear lobes, or the tip of the nose.
  - ☞ If symptoms are detected, ***Get medical help immediately!*** If you must wait for help, ***Slowly re-warm affected areas. If the person is also showing signs of hypothermia, warm the body core before the extremities.***
- ❄ **Hypothermia:** Low body temperature. Warning signs include uncontrollable shivering, memory loss, disorientation, incoherence, slurred speech, drowsiness, and apparent exhaustion. If a person's body temperature is below 95 degrees Fahrenheit, ***Immediately seek medical attention.***

### **IF MEDICAL CARE IS NOT AVAILABLE:**

- ☞ Begin warming the person slowly, warm the body core first. If needed use your own body heat to help.
- ☞ Get the person into dry clothing and wrap them in a warm blanket covering them completely, including the head and neck.
- ☞ Do not give the person alcohol, drugs, coffee, or any hot beverage or food; warm broth is better.
- ☞ Do not warm extremities (arms & legs) first! This drives the cold blood toward the heart and can lead to heart failure.
- ☼ **Heart Attack:** Strain from the cold and hard labor may cause a heart attack.
- ☞ Avoid overexertion, such as shoveling heavy snow, pushing a car, or walking in deep snows, especially if you are not in peak physical condition.
- ☞ If you must shovel snow, take it slow and lift small amounts, especially when removing heavy snow, slush or ice.

### ***Food & Drink***

*Food provides the body with energy for producing its own heat. Keep the body replenished with fluids (water and juice; limit your intake of caffeine and alcohol) to prevent dehydration.*

### **☼ PREPARE IN ADVANCE:**

- ☞ Keep extra blankets on hand, check battery powered equipment. Store spare batteries.
- ☞ If you have propane or oil heat, check your fuel supply.
- ☞ Check your food supply and stock up on basic items.
- ☞ Winterize your car, keep the fuel tank full.

### **☼ DRESS APPROPRIATELY:**

- ☞ Wearing a hat prevents the loss of half your body heat.
- ☞ Gloves and warm socks help protect fingers and toes, which is where you can first feel the effects of cold temperatures.
- ☞ Wear layers of loose-fitting, warm clothing. Remove layers to avoid overheating, perspiration, and subsequent chill. Layering also helps you prepare for different conditions and activities.
- ☞ Use three essential layers:
  - Underwear - choose long underwear, or thin, snug-fitting pants with a long-sleeved T-shirt or turtleneck.
  - Insulation - sweaters, sweatshirts, and other similar garments are good insulators.
  - Outer Shell - Choose garments that are windproof, and preferably waterproof. Good fit is crucial.

