

# Be Aware!

## *Winter Storm Watches and Warnings.*

- A **winter storm watch** indicates that severe winter weather may affect your area.
- A **winter storm warning** indicates that severe winter weather conditions are definitely on the way or are already here.
- A **blizzard warning** means that large amounts of falling or blowing snow and sustained winds of at least 35 miles per hour are expected for several hours.

**If you don't have to drive, don't.**

## *Pay attention to the news.*

Local radio and television stations provide up-to-date weather information. Investing in a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) weather radio is another way to receive weather and other emergency alerts. In addition, the Iowa Department of Transportation offers real-time information on current road conditions on their website or by calling 5-1-1.

**Be Ready Iowa** ✓

[www.beready.iowa.gov](http://www.beready.iowa.gov)



### **Our Mission**

To support, coordinate and maintain state and local homeland security and emergency management activities in order to establish sustainable communities and assure economic opportunities for Iowa and its citizens.

# Winter Weather

## *A Guide for Your Safety*



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A major winter storm can be lethal. Preparing for cold weather conditions and responding to them effectively can reduce the dangers caused by winter storms.



## BEFORE the Storm Arrives...

### 1 Winterize Your Home

- Service snow removal equipment and have rock salt on hand to melt ice on walkways and kitty litter to generate temporary traction.
- Make sure you have sufficient heating fuel; regular fuel sources may be cut off.
- Insulate walls and attic.
- Caulk and weather-strip doors and windows.
- Install storm windows or cover windows with plastic from the inside.
- Prevent your pipes from freezing.
  - Wrap pipes 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.



### 2 Have Emergency Supplies on Hand in Case the Power Goes Out

- Flashlight and a portable radio, plus extra batteries for both
- First aid kit
- At least 3-5 days supply of food (include items that do not require refrigeration or cooking in case the power is off)
- Non-electric can opener
- At least a week's supply of all essential medications
- Extra blankets and sleeping bags
- Fire extinguisher (A-B-C type)



### 3 Develop an Emergency Plan

- In case family members are separated from one another during a winter storm, have a plan for getting back together.
- Ask an out-of-state relative or friend to serve as the "family contact." After a disaster, it's often easier to call long distance. Make sure everyone knows the name, address, and phone number of the contact person.
- Make sure all family members know how to respond after a severe winter storm. Teach children how and when to call 9-1-1, police or fire department, and which radio station to listen to for emergency information.



## During a Winter Storm or Blizzard...

### If You Are Indoors

- Stay indoors and dress warmly.
- Conserve heat. Lower the thermostat to 65°F during the day and 55°F at night. Close off unused rooms.
- If the pipes freeze, remove any insulation and wrap them in rags. Completely open all faucets and pour hot water over the pipes, starting where they were most exposed to the cold or most likely to be penetrated by the cold.
- Listen to the radio or TV for current information.

### If You Are Outdoors

- Dress warmly in loose-fitting, layered, light-weight clothing. Layers can be removed to prevent perspiration and chill. Outer garments should be tightly-woven and water repellant. Mittens are warmer than gloves because fingers create warmth when touching.
- If you shovel snow, stretch to help warm up your body. Also, take frequent breaks.



- Avoid overexertion. Cold weather puts added strain on the heart. Unaccustomed exercise such as shoveling snow can bring on a heart attack or make other medical conditions worse.
- Keep dry. Change wet clothing frequently to prevent loss of body heat. Wet clothing loses all of its insulating value.



## Frostbite and Hypothermia



- Frostbite is a severe reaction to cold exposure that can be permanently damaging. Symptoms include: loss of feeling and a white or pale appearance in fingers, toes, or nose and earlobes.
- Hypothermia can be brought on when the body temperature drops to less than 90°F. Symptoms include uncontrollable shivering, slow speech, memory lapses, stumbling, drowsiness, and exhaustion.
- If frostbite or hypothermia is suspected, begin warming the person slowly and seek immediate medical assistance. Warm the person's trunk first. Use your own body heat to help. Arms and legs should be warmed last because stimulation of the limbs can drive cold blood toward the heart and lead to heart failure. Put the person in dry clothing and wrap their entire body in a blanket.
- Never give a frostbite or hypothermia victim something with caffeine or alcohol in it. Caffeine, a stimulant, can cause the heart to beat faster and alcohol, a depressant, can slow the heart. Both can hasten the ill effects of cold body temperatures.

