

Winter Weather: FEMA Urges Citizens To Be Prepared

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WASHINGTON, D.C. -- With winter rapidly approaching, every family should be prepared to face another period of dangerous winter storms and flooding. The Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) urges all residents to be prepared.

To stay safe, prepare a disaster supplies kit and a family communications plan; prepare your home against the cold; learn what winter storm watches and warnings mean; and if stranded in your car away from home, know what steps to take.

- **Assemble an emergency supply kit with:**
 - Non-perishable food;
 - Water- enough for three days;
 - A battery -powered or hand-cranked radio;
 - Flashlights and batteries;
 - Rock salt to melt ice on walkways;
 - Sand to improve traction;
 - Snow shovels and other snow removal equipment;
 - Extra blankets, gloves and warm clothing.

- **Make a family plan to include:**
 - How to contact one another if not together when disaster strikes;
 - How and where to reassemble.

- **Prepare your home by:**
 - Insulating with weather stripping around doors and windowsills;
 - Insulating pipes with plastic or newspapers and allow water from faucets to drip a little to avoid freezing;
 - Learning how to shut off water valves if a pipe bursts;
 - Keeping fire extinguishers on hand and knowing how to use them;
 - Hiring an expert to check the structural stability of the roof to sustain the weight of extremely heavy snow accumulation;

- **Become familiar with winter weather terms:**
 - Winter Storm Advisory means cold, ice and snow are expected;
 - Winter Storm Watch means severe weather such as heavy snow or ice is possible in the next day or two, so finalize preparations and listen to weather radio or forecasts;

- Winter Storm Warning means severe winter conditions have begun or will begin soon, so stay inside.
- **If traveling by car:**
 - Carry an emergency supply kit;
 - Keep the gas tank full;
 - Let someone know your destination, route, and when you expect to arrive;
 - If you do get stuck, stay with your car, keep the overhead light on when the engine is running (and windows cracked) so you can be seen, and tie a brightly colored cloth (preferably red) to the antenna for rescuers to see.