



# Winter Safety Tips

## Home Emergency Supplies

Winter has arrived, plan ahead for extremely cold weather with a supply of these items in the event a winter storm or power outage prevents you from leaving home.

- \* Flashlights and extra batteries
- \* Battery-operated radio and extra batteries
- \* Emergency non-perishable foods that do not require refrigeration
- \* One week supply of essential medicines
- \* Emergency heating equipment, used properly
- \* Non-electric can opener
- \* Extra blankets and sleeping bags
- \* Bottled water
- \* Fire extinguisher

## Winterize Your Home

Take the time now to get your home ready for the winter season by following these tips:

- \* Have your heating system checked by a professional annually. This will ensure that your system is working safely and efficiently which, in turn, will save you money. If you heat by wood, clean your fireplace or stove. Have your chimney flue checked for any buildup of creosote and then cleaned to lessen the risk of fire.
- \* Make sure your home is properly insulated. If necessary, insulate walls and attic. This will help you to conserve energy and reduce your homes power demands for heat.
- \* Caulk and weather-strip doors and windowsills to keep cold air out.
- \* Install storm windows or cover windows with plastic from the inside. This will provide an extra layer of insulation, keeping more cold air out.
- \* Inspect and flush your water heater.
- \* Clean gutters. Leaves and other debris will hamper drainage.
- \* Replace batteries of smoke, heat and carbon monoxide detectors. If you did not do it when you set the clocks back, do it now.
- \* Insulate any water lines that run along exterior walls so your water supply will be less likely to freeze.

## Staying Warm Indoors

If your heat goes out during a winter storm, you can keep warm by closing off rooms you do not need.

- \* Use only safe sources of alternative heat such as a cleaned fireplace, small well-vented wood or coal stove or portable space heaters. Always follow manufacturers instructions.
- \* Install a smoke detector and a battery operated carbon monoxide detector near the area to be heated.
- \* Do not burn paper in a fireplace.
- \* Never leave children unattended near a space heater and avoid using extension cords to plug in your space heater.
- \* If you are over 65 years old, place an easy to read thermometer indoor where you will see it frequently as the ability to feel a change in temperature decreases with age.
- \* Dress in layers of lightweight clothing and wear a cap.
- \* Eat well-balanced meals and never use a charcoal or gas grill indoors since the fumes are deadly.
- \* If you have pets, bring them indoors.

## Protecting Water Pipes

To prevent the mess and aggravation of frozen water pipes, protect your home, apartment or business by following the simple steps below.

### Before Cold Weather

Locate and insulate pipes most susceptible to freezing, typically those near outer walls, in crawl spaces or in the attic

- \* Wrap pipes with heat tape (UL approved).
- \* Seal any leaks that allow cold air inside where pipes are located.
- \* Disconnect garden hoses and shut off and drain water from pipes leading to outside faucets. This reduces the chance of freezing in the short span of pipe just inside the house.
- \* If you plan to use a fireplace or wood stove for emergency heating, have your chimney or flue inspected each year.

### When It's Cold

- \* Let hot and cold water trickle at night from a faucet on an outside wall.
- \* Open cabinet doors to allow more heat to get to un-insulated pipes under a sink or appliance near an outer wall.
- \* Make sure heat is left on and set no lower than 55 degrees.

If you plan to be away have someone check your house daily to make sure the heat is still on to prevent freezing, or drain and shut off the water system (except indoor sprinkler systems).



### If Pipes Freeze

- \* Make sure you and your family knows how to shut off the water, in case pipes burst. Stopping the water flow minimize the damage to your home. Call a plumber and contact your insurance agent.
- \* Never try to thaw a pipe with an open flame or torch.
- \* Always be careful of the potential for electric shock in and around standing water.

### If The Lights Go Out

If you lose electrical service during the winter, follow these tips:

- \* Call your utility first to determine area repair schedules. Turn off or unplug lights and appliances to prevent a circuit overload when service is restored. Leave one light on to indicate power has been restored.
- \* To help prevent freezing pipes, turn on faucets slightly. Running water will not freeze as quickly.
- \* Protect yourself from carbon monoxide poisoning:
  - \* **DO NOT** operate generators indoors; the motor emits deadly carbon monoxide gas.
  - \* **DO NOT** use charcoal to cook indoors. It, too, can cause a buildup of carbon monoxide gas.
  - \* **DO NOT** use your gas oven to heat your home -- prolonged use of an open oven in a closed house can create carbon monoxide gas.
- \* Make sure fuel space heaters are used with proper ventilation.
- \* Keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible to help reduce food spoilage.

### Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

Carbon monoxide poisoning is a silent, deadly killer claiming about 1,000 lives each year in the U.S. Such common items as automotive exhaust, home heating systems and obstructed chimneys can produce the colorless, odorless gas. The gas can also be produced by poorly vented generators, kerosene heaters, gas grills and other items used for cooking and heating when used improperly during the winter months.

- \* **NEVER** run generators indoors. Open a window slightly when using a kerosene heater.
- \* **NEVER** use charcoal to cook indoors.
- \* **NEVER** use a gas oven to heat your home.

Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning include sleepiness, headaches and dizziness. If you suspect carbon monoxide poisoning, ventilate the area and get to a hospital. For more information on Carbon Monoxide Alert go to [www.kdheks.gov/beh/carbon\\_monoxide.htm](http://www.kdheks.gov/beh/carbon_monoxide.htm) .

### Fire Safety

Wood-burning stoves, fireplaces and heaters can add a cozy glow, but make sure you are using them safely.

- \* Always keep a screen around an open flame.
- \* Never use gasoline to start your fireplace.
- \* Never burn charcoal indoors.
- \* Do not close the damper when ashes are hot.



When using alternative heat sources such as a fireplace, woodstove, etc. always make sure you have proper ventilation. Keep curtains, towels and potholders away from hot surfaces.

- \* Have your chimney checked before the season for creosote buildup -- and then clean it.
- \* Have a fire extinguisher and smoke detectors ... and make sure they work! Establish a well-planned escape route with the entire family.
- \* Use a battery-operated carbon monoxide detector near the area to be heated with alternative heat. Test the batteries monthly and replace batteries twice a year.
- \* Never place a space heater on top of furniture or near water.
- \* Never leave children unattended near a space heater.
- \* Avoid using extension cords to plug in your space heater.
- \* Store a multipurpose, dry-chemical fire extinguisher near the area to be heated.

## Clearing Your Roof

As the snow and ice continues to build up, homeowners should think about safety before trying to clear the snow from their roof. Here are some safety tips:

- \* When possible, use long-handled snow rakes or poles.
- \* Make certain not to contact electrical wires.
- \* If one must use a ladder, make certain that the base is securely anchored. Ask a friend, neighbor or adult family member to hold the ladder while you climb.
- \* Know where the snow is going to fall before clearing the area.
- \* If possible, do not attempt to clear the roof alone

## Road Safety

Visit KDOT's 511 Travel Information website for road conditions before travelling at <http://511.ksdot.org> or on your mobile phone at <http://511mm.ksdot.org/>.



When winter storms strike, do not drive unless necessary.

If you must travel, make sure your car is stocked with survival gear like blankets, a shovel, flashlight and extra batteries, extra warm clothing, set of tire chains, battery booster cables, quick energy foods and brightly-colored cloth to use as a distress flag.

- \* Keep your gas tank full to prevent gasoline freeze-up.
- \* If you have a cell phone or two-way radio available for your use, keep the battery charged and keep it with you whenever traveling. If you should become stranded, you will be able to call for help, advising rescuers of your location.
- \* Make sure someone knows your travel plans.

*If you own a cell phone be sure to carry it for emergencies while traveling.*

## Winterize Your Vehicle

Preparing your vehicle for the winter season now will help ensure your vehicle is in good working order when you need it most. Have a mechanic check the following items on your vehicle:

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|--------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| * Antifreeze | * Exhaust system         | * Oil level                          |
| * Battery    | * Flashing hazard lights | * Lights                             |
| * Brakes     | * Heater                 | * Thermostat                         |
| * Defroster  | * Ignition system        | * Wipers and windshield washer fluid |

Install good winter tires. Make sure the tires have adequate tread. All-weather radials are usually adequate for most winter conditions. You may also want to carry a set of tire chains in your vehicle for heavy snow conditions.

- \* Keep a windshield scraper and small broom for ice and snow removal and maintain at least a half tank of gas throughout the winter season.
- \* Finally, plan long trips carefully. Listen to the local media report or call law enforcement agencies for the latest road conditions.

## Trapped in a Car

What would you do if a blizzard trapped you on the road? Here are some tips to follow:

- \* Stay in your car and wait for help to find you.
- \* Run your engine for short periods of time to stay warm. Keep your down-wind window open and make sure your exhaust pipe is clear of snow.
- \* Turn on the dome light at night when you are running the engine to signal rescuers.
- \* Hang a brightly colored piece of cloth or piece of clothing from your car.
- \* Exercise from time to time by vigorously moving arms, legs, fingers and toes to keep blood circulating and to keep warm.

For more information on winter car safety go to [www.kdheks.gov/beh/download/Winter\\_car\\_safety.pdf](http://www.kdheks.gov/beh/download/Winter_car_safety.pdf).

## Outdoor Safety

When the weather is freezing and especially if there are high winds, try to stay indoors. Make any trips outside as brief as possible, and remember these tips to protect your health and safety. Do not ignore shivering, it is a signal to return indoors as the first sign that body is losing heat.

## Dress Warmly and Stay Dry

Adults and children should wear:

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| * A hat  | * several layers of loose fitting clothes |
| * A scarf or knit mask to cover face and mouth | * sleeves that are snug at the wrist      |
| * Mittens (they are warmer than gloves)        | * water-resistant coat and boots          |

## Understand Wind Chill

The Wind Chill index is the temperature your body feels when the air temperature is combined with the wind speed. It is based on the rate of heat loss from exposed skin caused by the effects of wind and cold. The Wind Chill Chart below shows the difference between actual air temperature and perceived temperature, and amount of time until frostbite occurs.

Wind Chill Factor

	Actual Air Temperature °F								
	40°	30°	20°	10°	0°	-10°	-20°	-30°	-40°
<i>calm</i>									
10	34	21	9	-4	-16	-28	-41	-53	-66
20	30	17	4	-9	-22	-35	-48	-61	-74
30	28	15	1	-12	-26	-39	-53	-67	-80
40	27	13	-1	-15	-29	-43	-57	-71	-84
50	26	12	-3	-17	-31	-45	-60	-74	-88
60	25	10	-4	-19	-33	-48	-62	-76	-91

Frostbite times: 

30 minutes	10 minutes	5 minutes
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National Weather Service (NWS) Wind Chill Chart adapted December 2012 from [www.nws.noaa.gov/om/windchill](http://www.nws.noaa.gov/om/windchill)

"Serious health problems can result from prolonged exposure to the cold and Kansans need to be aware of the most common cold weather-related problems, frostbite and hypothermia," said Dr. Robert Moser, State Health Officer and Secretary at KDHE. "People experiencing symptoms of hypothermia or frostbite need to seek medical care."

**Warnings signs of hypothermia** are shivering, exhaustion, confusion, fumbling hands, memory loss, slurred speech and drowsiness. Seek medical attention quickly.

**Frostbite** causes a loss of feeling and color in affected areas. It most often affects the nose, ears, cheeks, chin, fingers, or toes. Frostbite can permanently damage the body, and severe cases can lead to amputation. The risk of frostbite is increased in people with reduced blood circulation and among people who are not dressed properly for extremely cold temperatures.

At the first signs of redness or pain in any skin area, get out of the cold or protect any exposed skin - frostbite may be beginning. A victim is often unaware of frostbite until someone else points it out because the frozen tissues are numb. If you detect symptoms of frostbite, seek medical care. If there is frostbite but no sign of hypothermia and immediate medical care is not available, proceed as follows:

- \* Get into a warm room as soon as possible.
- \* Unless absolutely necessary, do not walk on frostbitten feet or toes-this increases the damage.
- \* Immerse the affected area in warm-not hot-water (the temperature should be comfortable to the touch for unaffected parts of the body).
- \* Or, warm the affected area using body heat. For example, the heat of an armpit can be used to warm frostbitten fingers.
- \* Do not rub the frostbitten area with snow or massage it at all. This can cause more damage.
- \* Don't use a heating pad, heat lamp, or the heat of a stove, fireplace, or radiator for warming. Affected areas are numb and can be easily burned.