

Winter Storm Fact Sheet

(content from www.getprepared.gc.ca)

Blizzards

- If a blizzard or heavy blowing snow is forecast, you may want to string a lifeline between your house and any outbuildings to which you may have to go during the storm.
- If you live on a farm, shelter animals. Generally, if the structure is sound, the animals should be placed indoors. Once they are inside, secure all openings to the outside. The sheltering should be ordered and completed before similar action is taken for humans. Water supplies should be checked for freezing. Many animals have died of thirst during the winter, even with abundant water sources, because they could not drink the water as it was frozen solid.
- When a winter storm hits, stay indoors. If you must go outside, dress for the weather. Outer clothing should be tightly woven and water-repellent. The jacket should have a hood. Wear mittens - they are warmer than gloves - and a hat, as large portion of body heat is lost through the head.
- In wide-open areas, visibility can be virtually zero during heavy blowing snow or a blizzard. You can easily lose your way. If a blizzard strikes, do not try to walk to another building unless there is a rope to guide you or something you can follow.
- If you must travel during a winter storm, do so during the day and let someone know your route and arrival time.
- If your car gets stuck in a blizzard or snowstorm, remain calm and stay in your car. Allow fresh air in your car by opening the window slightly on the sheltered side - away from the wind. You can run the car engine about 10 minutes every half-hour if the exhaust system is working well. Beware of exhaust fumes and check the exhaust pipe periodically to make sure it is not blocked with snow. Remember: you can't smell potentially fatal carbon monoxide fumes.
- To keep your hands and feet warm, exercise them periodically. In general, it is a good idea to keep moving to avoid falling asleep. If you do try to shovel the snow from around your car, avoid overexerting yourself.
- Overexertion in the bitter cold can cause death as a result of sweating or a heart attack.
- Keep watch for traffic or searchers.

Ice storms

- Ice from freezing rain accumulates on branches, power lines and buildings. If you must go outside when a significant amount of ice has accumulated, pay attention to branches or wires that could break due to the weight of the ice and fall on you. Ice sheets could also do the same.
- Never touch power lines. A hanging power line could be charged (live) and you would run the risk of electrocution. Remember also that ice, branches or power lines can continue to break and fall for several hours after the end of the precipitation.
- When freezing rain is forecast, avoid driving. Even a small amount of freezing rain can make roads extremely slippery. Wait several hours after freezing rain ends so that road maintenance crews have enough time to spread sand or salt on icy roads.
- Rapid onsets of freezing rain combined with the risks of blizzards increase the chances for extreme hypothermia. If you live on a farm, move livestock promptly to shelter where feed is available. Forage is often temporarily inaccessible during and immediately after ice storms. Animal reactions to ice storms are similar to that of blizzards.

If the power goes out:

- First, check whether the power outage is limited to your home. If your neighbours' power is still on, check your own circuit breaker panel or fuse box. If the problem is not a breaker or a fuse, check the service wires leading to the house. If they are obviously damaged or on the ground, stay at least 10 meters back and notify your electric supply authority. Keep the number along with other emergency numbers near your telephone.
- If your neighbours' power is also out, notify your electric supply authority.
- Turn off all tools, appliances and electronic equipment, and turn the thermostat(s) for the home heating system down to minimum to prevent damage from a power surge when power is restored. Also, power can be restored more easily when there is not a heavy load on the electrical system.
- Turn off all lights, except one inside and one outside, so that both you and hydro crews outside know that power has been restored.
- Don't open your freezer or fridge unless it is absolutely necessary. A full freezer will keep food frozen for 24 to 36 hours if the door remains closed.
- Never use charcoal or gas barbecues, camping heating equipment, or home generators indoors. They give off carbon monoxide. Because you can't smell or see it, carbon monoxide can cause health problems and is life-threatening.
- Use proper candle holders. Never leave lit candles unattended and keep out of reach of children. Always extinguish candles before going to bed.
- Listen to your battery-powered or wind-up radio for information on the outage and advice from authorities.
- Make sure your home has a working carbon monoxide detector. If it is hard-wired to the house's electrical supply, ensure it has a battery-powered back-up.
- Protect sensitive electrical appliances such as TVs, computer, and DVD players with a surge-protecting powerbar

For more information, visit <http://www.getprepared.gc.ca/cnt/rsracs/pblctns/svrstrms-wtd/svrstrms-wtd-eng.pdf>