

# During a Winter Storm

## Guidelines

- **Listen to your radio, television, or NOAA Weather Radio** for weather reports and emergency information.
- **Eat regularly and drink ample fluids**, but avoid caffeine and alcohol.
- **Conserve fuel, if necessary**, by keeping your residence cooler than normal. Temporarily close off heat to some rooms.
- **If the pipes freeze**, remove any insulation or layers of newspapers and wrap pipes in rags. Completely open all faucets and pour hot water over the pipes, starting where they were most exposed to the cold (or where the cold was most likely to penetrate).
- **Maintain ventilation when using kerosene heaters** to avoid build-up of toxic fumes. Refuel kerosene heaters outside and keep them at least three feet from flammable objects.

## If you are outdoors

- **Avoid overexertion when shoveling snow.** Overexertion can bring on a heart attack—a major cause of death in the winter. If you must shovel snow, stretch before going outside.
- **Cover your mouth.** Protect your lungs from extremely cold air by covering your mouth when outdoors. Try not to speak unless absolutely necessary.
- **Keep dry.** Change wet clothing frequently to prevent a loss of body heat. Wet clothing loses all of its insulating value and transmits heat rapidly.
- **Watch for signs of frostbite.** These include loss of feeling and white or pale appearance in extremities such as fingers, toes, ear lobes, and the tip of the nose. If symptoms are detected, get medical help immediately.
- **Watch for signs of hypothermia.** These include uncontrollable shivering, memory loss, disorientation, incoherence, slurred speech, drowsiness, and apparent exhaustion.
- **If symptoms of hypothermia are detected:**
  - get the victim to a warm location
  - remove wet clothing
  - put the person in dry clothing and wrap their entire body in a blanket
  - warm the center of the body first

- give warm, non-alcoholic or non-caffeinated beverages if the victim is conscious
- get medical help as soon as possible.

## **If you are driving**

- **Drive only if it is absolutely necessary. If you must drive, consider the following:**
  - Travel in the day, don't travel alone, and keep others informed of your schedule.
  - Stay on main roads; avoid back road shortcuts.
- **If a blizzard traps you in the car:**
  - **Pull off the highway.** Turn on hazard lights and hang a distress flag from the radio antenna or window.
  - **Remain in your vehicle where rescuers are most likely to find you.** Do not set out on foot unless you can see a building close by where you know you can take shelter. Be careful; distances are distorted by blowing snow. A building may seem close, but be too far to walk to in deep snow.
  - **Run the engine and heater about 10 minutes each hour to keep warm.** When the engine is running, open a downwind window slightly for ventilation and periodically clear snow from the exhaust pipe. *This will protect you from possible carbon monoxide poisoning.*
  - **Exercise to maintain body heat, but avoid overexertion.** In extreme cold, use road maps, seat covers, and floor mats for insulation. Huddle with passengers and use your coat for a blanket.
  - **Take turns sleeping.** One person should be awake at all times to look for rescue crews.
  - **Drink fluids to avoid dehydration.**
  - **Be careful not to waste battery power.** Balance electrical energy needs - the use of lights, heat, and radio - with supply.
  - **Turn on the inside light at night** so work crews or rescuers can see you.
  - **If stranded in a remote area,** stomp large block letters in an open area spelling out HELP or SOS and line with rocks or tree limbs to attract the attention of rescue personnel who may be surveying the area by airplane.