

# Winter Weather Toolkit

---

The Federal Emergency Management Agency ([FEMA](#)), the [Ready Campaign](#), and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration ([NOAA](#)) are promoting [winter weather preparedness](#) this December and encouraging the [Whole Community](#) to take action.

Every year we see how winter weather can impact our region. Heavy snowfall and extreme cold can bring things to a halt. Winter weather can knock out heat, power, and communication services to your home, office and city. But winter weather isn't just blizzards and heavy snowfall – it's freezing rain, high winds, hail and other conditions too. Exposure to the cold, dangerous conditions on roads, and improper use of heaters are all concerns during winter months. It is important to be prepared for winter weather before it strikes to decrease your risk.

In addition to asking Americans to promote winter weather preparedness through their own outreach channels, [FEMA Region 3](#) is encouraging everyone to get the word out and help the Whole Community prepare for winter. This toolkit is designed to provide you and your organization with easy to use tools to promote this campaign and help you to support your own stakeholders to take action against [winter weather](#).

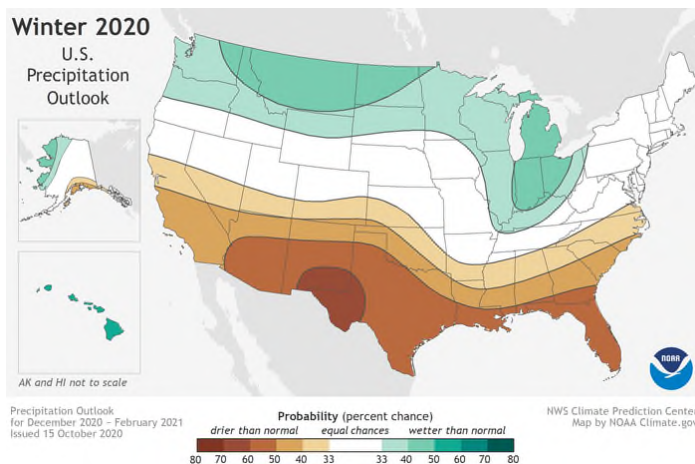
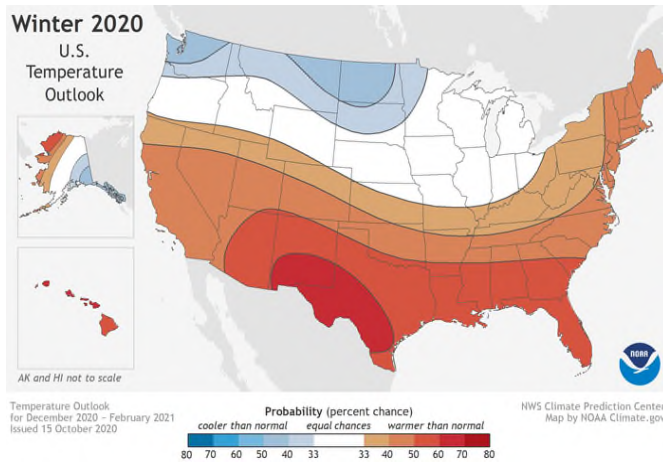
December also plays host to several holidays. COVID-19 has put a damper on many of our travel and gathering plans, but there are still ways to celebrate safely. In this extended version of our Winter Weather Toolkit, we will note enhanced safety recommendations currently in place due to COVID-19. The country is currently at its peak average case rate since the beginning of the pandemic, so staying safe during the holiday season is more important than ever.

## FEMA Region 3 Points of Contact

Public Affairs	<a href="#">Gabe Lugo</a>	202-304-0398
Congressional Affairs	<a href="#">Nicholas Morici</a>	267-546-6419
Social Media & Digital Communications	<a href="#">Amanda Hancher</a>	215-459-3637
Intergovernmental Affairs	<a href="#">David Thomason</a>	215-931-5706
Private Sector	<a href="#">Melissa Wiehenstroer</a>	202-568-4391
Volunteer Agency Liaison	<a href="#">Amy Eden</a>	202-710-6297
Community Preparedness Officer	Vacant	
Regional Preparedness Liaison	<a href="#">John Dispaldo</a>	610-930-6869
Disability Integration	<a href="#">PJ Mattiacci</a>	267-270-5804 (text only)

# Winter Weather

## 2020-2021 Winter Weather Forecast



### Key Messages for Winter Weather

- [Winter weather](#) can occur anywhere and can include freezing rain, ice, snow, high winds or a combination of all these conditions.
- Winter weather can cause power outages that last for days or weeks, making it hard to keep warm, taking out communication networks, and making travel very dangerous. Heavy snowfall and extreme cold can immobilize an entire region.
- Winter storms can range from moderate snow over a few hours to a blizzard with blinding, wind-driven snow that lasts for several days. Many winter storms are accompanied by dangerously low temperatures and sometimes by strong winds, icing, sleet and freezing rain.

- Winter storms can be deadly. Many deaths can be indirectly linked to them, such as from exposure to the cold, traffic accidents on icy roads, etc.
- It's important to be prepared for winter weather, from stocking your kit with extra food and water to having a family plan. If you'll be traveling during the winter or for the holidays, it's important to plan your travel with winter weather considerations in mind.

## Talking Points for Winter Weather

### **Preparing for Winter Weather**

- With winter approaching, be sure to look through your emergency kit and add supplies specific to winter, such as:
  - Rock salt or more environmentally safe products to melt ice on walkways. (Remember that these products can be harmful to dogs, so be sure to choose a non-toxic brand if you or your neighbors have pets.)
  - Sand/gravel to improve traction.
  - Snow shovels or other snow removal equipment.
  - Heating fuel. If you have a fireplace or wood-burning stove, keep a supply of good, dry wood for heating in case you lose power.
  - Adequate clothing and blankets to keep warm, including coats, sweaters, hats, gloves, mittens, scarves, etc.
  - Keep your [NOAA Weather Radio](#) in your kit to receive broadcast alerts and warnings directly from the NWS for all hazards. You may also sign up in advance to receive notifications from your local emergency services.
- Make a [Family Communications Plan](#). Your family may not be together when disaster strikes, so it is important to know how you will contact one another, how you will get back together, and what you will do in case of an emergency.
- Before the storm hits, download free smartphone apps, such as those available from [FEMA](#) and the [American Red Cross](#), which provide information about finding shelters, providing first aid and seeking assistance for recovery.
- Be prepared to bring your pets/animals inside in the event of a winter storm. Move animals and livestock to a sheltered area with non-frozen drinking water.

### **Plan Your Travel during Winter Weather Carefully**

- During a winter storm, minimize your travel by car. Even if winter weather conditions aren't obviously present, conditions like black ice can cause vehicles to lose control.
- If you plan on traveling by vehicle during the winter, make sure to winterize your vehicle. Check (or have a mechanic check) the following items in your car:

- Ensure that antifreeze levels are sufficient to avoid freezing.
  - Ensure your battery and ignition are in top condition and battery terminals are clean.
  - Check for wear and fluid levels of breaks.
  - Check for leaks and crimped pipes in your exhaust system, and repair/replace as necessary. Carbon monoxide is deadly and usually there is no warning of its presence.
  - Fuel and air filters - replace and keep water out of the system by using additives and maintaining a full tank of gas. A full tank will keep the fuel line from freezing.
  - Ensure your heater and defroster are working properly.
  - Check your lights and hazard lights to ensure they're working properly.
  - Check your oil level and weight. Heavier oils can congeal more at low temperatures and do not lubricate as well.
  - Repair any problems with your windshield wipers and maintain proper washer fluid levels.
  - Install good winter tires with adequate tread. Remember that some jurisdictions may require vehicles be equipped with chains or snow tires with studs.
- Keep a winter weather supply kit in your vehicle, including:
    - Shovel
    - Windshield scraper and small broom
    - Flashlight
    - Battery-powered radio
    - Extra batteries
    - Water
    - Food
    - Matches
    - Extra clothing and blankets to keep warm, such as coats, hats, socks, mittens, etc.
    - First aid kit
    - Medications
    - Tow chain or rope
    - Jumper cables
    - Road salt and sand
    - Emergency flares
    - Fluorescent distress flag
- If you're traveling overseas, remember to enroll in the [U.S. Department of State's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program \(STEP\)](#) to receive important information from the embassy about safety conditions in your destination country, helping you make informed decisions about your travel plans.
    - By enrolling, the U.S. Embassy can contact you in an emergency, whether a natural disaster, civil unrest or family emergency.
    - Take a look at the [U.S. Department of State's Traveler's Checklist](#) too, where you can get helpful tips about safety and security, crisis planning, health precautions and money matters.

## **Be Informed**

- Know the below terms and what actions to take. Be alert to weather reports and tune in for specific guidance when these conditions develop.
  - Freezing Rain: Rain that freezes when it hits the ground, creating a coating of ice on roads, walkways, trees and power lines.
  - Sleet: Rain that turns to ice pellets before reaching the ground. Sleet also causes moisture on roads to freeze and become slippery.
  - Wind Chill: Wind chill is the temperature it “feels like” when you are outside. The NWS provides a [wind chill calculator](#) to show the difference between air temperature and the perceived temperature and the amount of time until frostbite occurs.
  - Winter Weather Advisory: The NWS issues a winter weather advisory when conditions are expected to cause significant inconveniences that may be hazardous. If caution is used, these situations should not be life-threatening.
  - Winter Storm Watch: A winter storm is possible in your area. The NWS issues a winter storm watch when severe winter conditions, such as heavy snow and/or ice, may affect your area but the location and timing are still uncertain.
    - A winter storm watch is issued 12 to 36 hours in advance of a potential severe storm. Tune in to your NOAA Weather Radio, local radio, TV, or other news sources for more information.
    - Monitor alerts, check your emergency supplies, and gather any items you may need if you lose power.
  - Winter Storm Warning: A winter storm is occurring or will soon occur in your area.
  - Blizzard Warning: Sustained winds or frequent gusts to 35 miles per hour or greater and considerable amounts of falling or blowing snow (reducing visibility to less than a quarter mile) are expected to prevail for a period of three hours or longer.
  - Frost/Freeze Warning: Below freezing temperatures are expected.

## **Carbon Monoxide**

- Carbon monoxide-related deaths are highest during colder months and are likely due to increased use of gas-powered furnaces and alternative heating, cooking, and power sources used inappropriately indoors during power outages.
- Never use a generator, grill, camp stove or other gasoline, propane, natural gas or charcoal-burning devices inside a home, garage, basement, crawlspace or any partially enclosed area. Locate unit away from doors, windows and vents that could allow carbon monoxide to come indoors. Keep these devices at least 20 feet from doors, windows and vents.
- The primary hazards to avoid when using alternate sources for electricity, heating, or cooking are carbon monoxide poisoning, electric shock and fires.

- Install carbon monoxide alarms in central locations on every level of your home and outside sleeping areas to provide early warning of accumulating carbon monoxide.
- If the carbon monoxide alarm sounds, move quickly to a fresh air location outdoors or by an open window or door.
- Call for help from the fresh air location and remain there until emergency personnel arrive to assist you.

### **Winterize your home**

- Winterize your home to extend the life of your fuel supply by insulating walls and attics, caulking and weather-stripping doors and windows, and installing storm windows or covering windows with plastic.
- Winterize your house, barn, shed or any other structure that may provide shelter for your family, neighbors, livestock or equipment. Clear rain gutters, repair roof leaks and cut away tree branches that could fall on a house or other structure during a storm.
- Maintain heating equipment and chimneys by having them cleaned and inspected every year.
- Insulate pipes with insulation or newspapers and plastic and allow faucets to drip a little during cold weather to avoid freezing. Running water, even at a trickle, helps prevent pipes from freezing.
- All fuel-burning equipment should be vented to the outside and kept clear.
- Keep fire extinguishers on hand, and make sure everyone in your house knows how to use them. House fires pose an additional risk during the winter, as more people turn to alternate heating sources without taking the necessary safety precautions.
- Learn how to shut off water valves (in case a pipe bursts).
- Hire a contractor to check the structural ability of the roof to sustain unusually heavy weight from the accumulation of snow or water, if drains on flat roofs do not work.

## **COVID-19 Holiday Safety (courtesy of HHS Region 3)**

### Key Messages for COVID-19 Holiday Safety

- With colder weather moving people indoors and pandemic fatigue setting in, COVID cases, fatalities and hospitalization are rising faster than ever before. This holiday season, we can take measures to slow the spread and keep ourselves and loved ones safe.
- A vaccine is on the way, but in the meantime, we cannot succumb to pandemic fatigue. We all need to hang in there a little longer and continue to take measures to protect ourselves and others.
- Holiday parties and household gatherings are at risk of being super spreader events. You can take preventative steps to keep yourself, your family and friends safe.
- Testing is a critical component in our battle against COVID-19. The more symptomatic and asymptomatic individuals we identify, the sooner we can take action to keep our families and community safe.

### Talking Points for COVID-19 Holiday Safety

- Remember the 3 Ws: **Wash** your hands, **Watch** your distance, and **Wear** a Mask.
- Many people who have COVID-19 don't show symptoms and may spread it without knowing it. It's critical for each of us to wear a mask to protect ourselves and others.
- While schools, the workplace and transportation have adopted effective mitigation measures, household gatherings continue to be a driving source for COVID-19 spread.
- Many hospitalizations have resulted from household gatherings. So while young folks may recover quickly, spending time at home with extended family and friends can increase the risk of spread and put high-risk individuals at greater risk of hospitalization.
- Our goal is to slow the spread, decrease hospitalizations, and decrease fatalities while keeping the economy open. If we want to go to work, go to school, eat at a restaurant - we cannot let our sense of personal accountability slip.
- Be creative and think about what you CAN do to stay safe! Celebrate only with members of your household, eat outside if you can, host a virtual meal, shop online, prepare and deliver a meal for a neighbor.
- Know your risk. If hosting a holiday gathering, limit the number of attendees and check the infection rates of the areas from which attendees are traveling from. Use this knowledge to inform you as to whether you should have a holiday

gathering.

- At gatherings that include people of different households, everyone should always wear a mask that covers both the mouth and nose, except when eating and drinking. Remember that wearing a mask protects you and your loved ones.
- Host and attend outdoor gatherings. Indoor gatherings, especially those with poor ventilation, generally pose more risk than outdoor gatherings.
- Increase ventilation by opening windows and doors to the extent it is safe and feasible based on the weather – or by placing central air/heating systems on continuous circulation.
- If you attend a holiday party or gathering of more than 10 people, in communities where cases are surging, you should talk to your doctor about getting tested.
- If you or your loved ones are worried you may have come into contact with COVID-19, please make an appointment to get tested.
- If you do get tested, you should self-quarantine/isolate at home pending test results and follow the advice of your health care provider or a public health professional.
- You can visit your [state](#) or [local](#) health department’s website to look for the latest local information on testing.
- Visit <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/travel-during-covid19.html> for CDC travel considerations and safety.

## **Press Release Template**

### **<ORGANIZATION> Encourages Winter Weather Preparedness**

**<CITY, St.>** – **<INSERT ORGANIZATION>** is promoting winter preparedness and encouraging their **<Employees or Residents>** to take action to prepare for winter weather.

**<INSERT ORGANIZATION>** is **<INSERT EVENT INFORMATION HERE>** OR **<committed to supporting winter preparedness>**.

Winter storms can occur anywhere and bring freezing rain, ice, snow, high winds or a combination of all these conditions. Winter weather can knock out heat, power, and communications services to your home or office, sometimes for days at a time. Heavy snowfall and extreme cold can immobilize an entire region. Being prepared for winter weather can decrease your risk.

The [Whole Community](#) can take action against winter weather this season by:

- Winterizing your [Emergency Supply Kit](#);



- Planning how to communicate with family and friends with an [Emergency Communication Plan](#);
- And knowing how to receive important weather information and updates, including signing-up for local community [alerts](#).

<QUOTE FROM LEADERSHIP TO SUPPORT CAMPAIGN>

More information regarding winter weather planning can be found at <INSERT ORGANIZATION WEBSITE or [Ready.gov](#) or [Listo.gov](#) (in Spanish).>

###

## **Online Resources**

More information about winter weather preparedness can be found through the following links:

- [Ready.gov](#)
- [Ready.gov Winter Weather](#)
- [Ready.gov News](#)
- FEMA Videos
  - [“When the Sky Turns Gray”](#)
  - [“Preparing for Winter Travel”](#)
  - [“Be Prepared for Emergencies While Traveling”](#)
- [Weather.gov](#)
- [Weather Terms](#)
- [CDC Winter Weather](#)
- [American Red Cross Winter Weather Resources](#)
- [Department of Health and Human Services Winter Weather Resources](#)
- [U.S. Fire Administration Winter Fire Safety](#)

## **Social Media, Images, & Graphics**

Social media, photos, and graphics for Critical Infrastructure

Below are sample messages that you can post on your own social media accounts to engage your friends/followers and promote whole community preparedness. More information and ideas on how to take action and be an example can be found on FEMA’s official [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) or [Instagram](#) accounts, Ready.gov’s official [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#) accounts, NOAA’s official [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#) accounts, National Weather Service’s official [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) accounts, or FEMA Region 3’s [Twitter](#) account.

## **Twitter**

- Layer up this winter! Protect yourself from COVID-19 and cold weather with the right gear for the season, including jacket, hat, mask, and gloves.
- Although winter comes as no surprise, many of us may not be ready for its arrival. Stay safe and healthy when temperatures start to fall by preparing indoors & outdoors. Learn more - <http://go.usa.gov/7Jp4>
- Before winter approaches, update your Emergency Supply Kit so you're ready for colder weather. [If you are able to, set aside extra soap, hand sanitizer, and disinfectants. http://www.ready.gov/make-a-plan](http://www.ready.gov/make-a-plan)
- #DYK Do you know the signs of hypothermia? [weather.gov/cold](http://weather.gov/cold) #WinterSafety
- Nor'easters impact millions in the eastern U.S. with heavy snow and strong winds. Are you prepared? <http://go.usa.gov/7Jp4> #WinterSafety
- Prepare for winter storms and cold weather with the kids by playing the disaster master game: [www.ready.gov/kids/games](http://www.ready.gov/kids/games) Password hint: SLEET
- Snow Prep tips: check on neighbors, charge cell phones, find flashlights (check batteries) and follow local officials online. #WinterSafety
- Winter storms make it hard to keep warm and make travel very dangerous. Plan ahead now! #BeReady #PreparedNotScared <http://go.usa.gov/7Jp4>
- [It's cold out! Plan ahead. If you need to stay in a public space to get out of the cold, follow @CDC guidance to be safe from COVID-19: wear a mask and practice social distancing. #WinterSafety #COVIDStopsWithMe https://www.ready.gov/winter-weather](https://www.ready.gov/winter-weather)
- This winter, look out for friends and neighbors. Stay safe - washing your hands, staying 6 feet apart, and wearing a mask. Learn how you and your friends can protect each other: <https://bit.ly/HowToWearMasks> #MaskingForAFriend #WinterSafety
- Check on neighbors to make sure they are prepared for winter while maintaining social distancing. Consider connecting by telephone, e-mail, text messages, video chat, and social media. #WinterSafety #PreparedNotScared
- Heavy snowfall and extreme cold can immobilize an entire region. Prepare ahead and often. #BeReady #PreparedNotScared <http://www.ready.gov/make-a-plan>
- Follow these 3 steps to save a life during cold weather: [weather.gov/cold](http://weather.gov/cold) #WinterSafety #BeReady #PreparedNotScared
- You may become isolated in your home and regular fuel sources may be cut off. Plan a secondary heating source. <http://www.ready.gov/make-a-plan>

- Bundling up in layers & staying dry is one of the best things you can do to stay safe this winter. [weather.gov/cold](http://weather.gov/cold) #WinterSafety
- Stay warm and #MaskUp today! Be sure to have several clean masks to use in case yours becomes wet or damp from snow. Cloth masks should not be worn when they become damp or wet. #WinterSafety <https://go.usa.gov/x7U9K>
- Being prepared allows you to avoid extra trips out and address minor issues at home. Consider adding cold medicine, masks, disinfectants, winter clothing & blankets to your kit. #BeReady #PreparedNotScared <http://go.usa.gov/7Jp4>
- Your family may not be together when a storm strikes, consider making a family communication plan. #BeReady #PreparedNotScared <http://go.usa.gov/7JHx>
- Conditions can change fast & become dangerous during winter. Consider signing up for alerts to stay informed. #BeReady #PreparedNotScared <http://go.usa.gov/7J6z>
- Winterize your vehicle to stay safe when driving this winter. Check or have a mechanic look out for these: <http://go.usa.gov/7J6z>.
- “When the Sky Turns Gray” #BeReady! Watch the animation to learn what you can do today! [https://youtu.be/XVpGJ\\_Xl\\_w](https://youtu.be/XVpGJ_Xl_w)
- During winter months, falling snow serves as an important source of fresh water. <http://www.srh.noaa.gov/jetstream/atmos/hydro.html> #WinterScience
- Arctic air, together with brisk winds, can lead to dangerously cold wind chill values. <http://www.nws.noaa.gov/om/cold/> #WinterScience
- You love your pets, so keep them warm, dry and well-fed this winter. #loveyourpets [www.ready.gov/pets](http://www.ready.gov/pets) #WinterSafety
- Check out avalanche safety tips before you hit the slopes at [weather.gov/avalanche](http://weather.gov/avalanche) #WinterSafety
- Protect workers & your business when winter weather hits. @OSHA #Preparedness & Response materials can get you started: <http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/emergencypreparedness/gettingstarted.html>

## **Facebook**

- #WinterStorms can occur anywhere and bring freezing rain, ice, snow and high winds. Prepare now by winterizing your Emergency Supply Kit and making a Family Communication Plan! <http://go.usa.gov/7Jp4>
- Winter storms make it hard to keep warm and make travel very dangerous. Plan alternative ways to heat your home if the power is out and make plans to decrease your travel to avoid bad weather!

<http://go.usa.gov/7Jp4>

- Heavy snowfall and extreme cold can immobilize an entire region. #BeReady for Winter Weather, learn how > <http://www.ready.gov/make-a-plan>
- Before winter approaches, update your Emergency Supply Kit so you're ready for colder weather with masks, disinfectants, blankets, warm clothing, shovel and other winter supplies. <http://www.ready.gov/winter-weather>
- Winterize your home to extend the life of your fuel supply by insulating walls and attics, caulking and weather-stripping doors and windows, and installing storm windows or covering windows with plastic. <http://www.ready.gov/winter-weather>
- Winterize your house, barn, shed or any other structure that may provide shelter for your family, neighbors, livestock or equipment. Clear rain gutters; repair roof leaks and cut away tree branches that could fall on a house or other structure during a storm. <http://www.ready.gov/winter-weather>
- Insulate pipes with insulation or newspapers and plastic and allow faucets to drip a little during cold weather to avoid freezing. Running water, even at a trickle, helps prevent pipes from freezing. <http://www.ready.gov/winter-weather>
- Keep fire extinguishers on hand, and make sure everyone in the building knows how to use them. House fires pose an added risk, as many turn to alternate heating sources without safety precautions. <http://www.ready.gov/winter-weather>
- You may become isolated in your home and regular fuel sources may be cut off. Plan a secondary heating source. <http://www.ready.gov/winter-weather>
- Your family may not be together when a storm strikes, consider making a family communication plan. Know how you will communicate and stay in touch. <http://go.usa.gov/7JHx>
- Conditions can change fast and become dangerous during winter. Consider signing up for alerts to stay informed. <http://go.usa.gov/7J6z>
- Winterize your vehicle to stay safe when driving this winter. Check or have a mechanic check out these items: <https://www.ready.gov/car>
- Know the terms used to describe changing winter weather conditions and what protective actions you should take to stay safe. [https://community.fema.gov/hazard/winter-storm-en-us/be-smart?lang=en\\_US](https://community.fema.gov/hazard/winter-storm-en-us/be-smart?lang=en_US)
- "When the Sky Turns Gray" it is time to get prepared! Watch the animation to learn what actions you can take today! [https://youtu.be/XVpGJ\\_Xlw](https://youtu.be/XVpGJ_Xlw)
- Before you hit the slopes, make sure check out [www.avalanche.org](http://www.avalanche.org) for current and forecast snow conditions. Find avalanche safety tips at [weather.gov/avalanche](http://weather.gov/avalanche)
- Protect workers & your business when winter weather hits. OSHA can get you started:

[www.osha.gov/SLTC/emergencypreparedness/gettingstarted.html](http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/emergencypreparedness/gettingstarted.html)

- Protect workers & your business when winter weather hits. OSHA can get you started: [www.osha.gov/SLTC/emergencypreparedness/gettingstarted.html](http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/emergencypreparedness/gettingstarted.html)



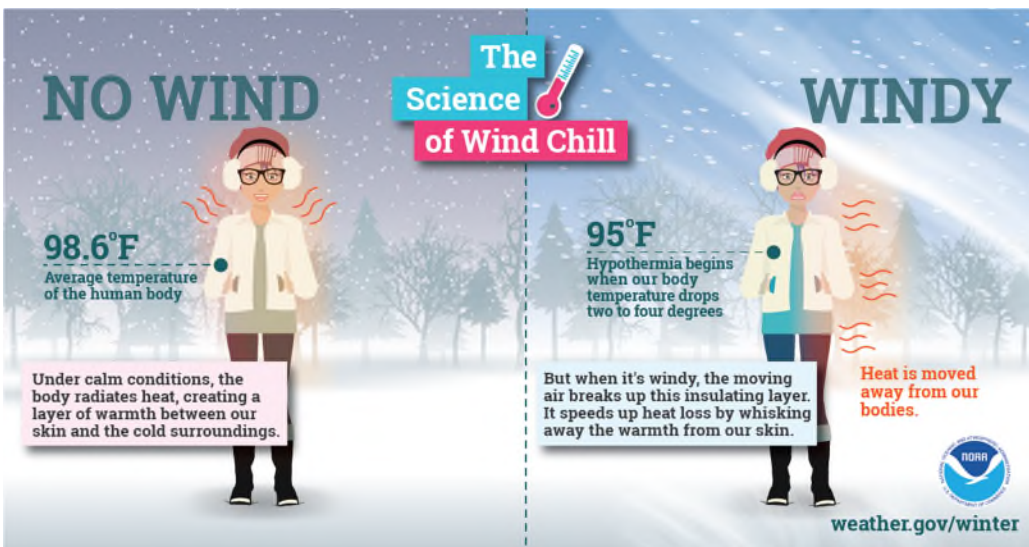
**Carbon Monoxide Detector**

### Indoor Winter Safety

Check your smoke/carbon monoxide (CO) detectors. The danger of CO poisoning is greater during winter storms when doors and windows stay closed and fireplaces and gas heaters are in use. You can also be exposed to deadly CO levels when “warming up” your car in the garage or when snow covers your tail pipe.



weather.gov



### The Science of Wind Chill

#### NO WIND

**98.6°F**  
Average temperature of the human body


Under calm conditions, the body radiates heat, creating a layer of warmth between our skin and the cold surroundings.

#### WINDY

**95°F**  
Hypothermia begins when our body temperature drops two to four degrees

But when it's windy, the moving air breaks up this insulating layer. It speeds up heat loss by whisking away the warmth from our skin.

Heat is moved away from our bodies.

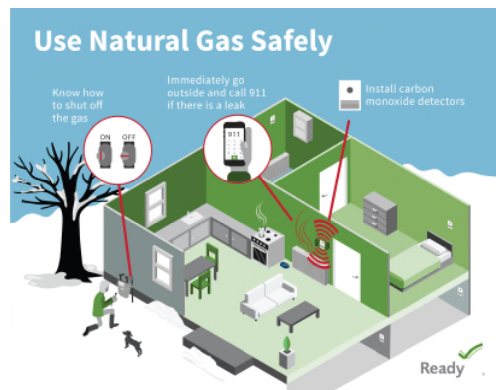


weather.gov/winter



Ready ✓

### LIMIT TIME OUTDOORS WHEN IT'S FREEZING



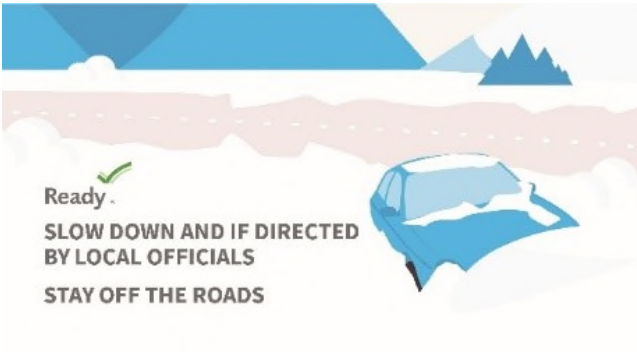
### Use Natural Gas Safely

Know how to shut off the gas

Immediately go outside and call 911 if there is a leak

Install carbon monoxide detectors

Ready ✓



Ready ✓  
**SLOW DOWN AND IF DIRECTED  
BY LOCAL OFFICIALS  
STAY OFF THE ROADS**



Ready ✓  
**Stay Safe  
When Heating  
Your Home**

**Practice Safe Cooking**

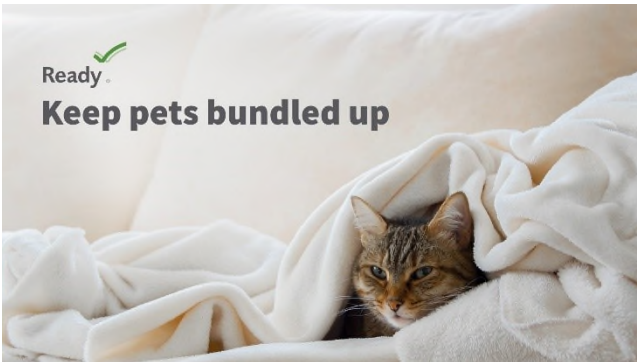


Ready ✓



Ready ✓  
**Build an  
Emergency  
Car Kit**

Ready ✓  
**Keep pets bundled up**



Ready ✓  
**Use Holiday  
Lighting  
Safely**