

Get the Facts: Winter Storms

Winter storms can be dangerous, but there are steps you can take ahead of time and during storms to make sure you're prepared. Taking preventative action is the best way to stay safe from the serious health risks associated with winter weather. This fact sheet includes tips to help you prepare for winter storms.

How can I protect myself from the dangers of winter storms?

- Stay inside where it's warm. If you go outside, limit the time and wear plenty of layers. Loose, warm clothes are best. Don't forget gloves, scarves, hats, ear muffs and boots.
- Keep at least three days' worth of drinking water and canned/no-cook food on hand. Put together an emergency kit that includes extra blankets, first aid and medication supplies and a flashlight with spare batteries.
- If you need to be outside shoveling snow, work slowly. Take breaks and listen to your body.
- Even if you have salted and shoveled your own walkway, walk carefully and slowly as there may still be snow and ice on the sidewalks. Exercising caution can help prevent head and other injuries from falling.
- Don't forget about pets. Even dogs and cats need help handling winter weather. Bring them indoors and make sure they have water and blankets.

How can I protect myself while traveling during winter storms?

- Traveling during winter storms can be dangerous, so avoid long trips if possible.
- If you have to drive, plan your trip ahead of time and let someone know where you're heading.
- Make sure your vehicle is in good working condition before driving. Make sure the windows are free of ice and that you have an emergency kit that includes water, blankets and a snow shovel.
- Drive slowly, increase your following distance and **ALWAYS** be prepared to turn back if conditions become too dangerous.
- If you're taking public transit, take the extra step of locating the bus or train schedule so you know what time it will arrive. This will limit the time you have to spend outside at the stop.

How can I help others stay safe from winter storms?

- Keep a list of contact information for relatives, neighbors and friends, and identify both primary and alternate means of communicating with each other.
- **Check on them frequently**, especially those who are elderly, disabled and/or live alone.
- Know where to locate, and how to contact emergency service providers such as police, fire department, EMS and hospitals.
- Keep a spare battery and charger for mobile devices.
- If you are uncomfortable checking on someone, call 311 to request a well-being check.

If you do not have access to heating, call 311 for assistance. You can also go to one of the City warming centers located throughout Chicago. The Garfield Center, located at 10 S. Kedzie Avenue, is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to connect residents to emergency shelter.