

WINTER WEATHER

Extreme Cold, Snow, Ice, Sleet and Freezing Rain

Dozens of Americans each year die due to exposure to cold. Add to that the number vehicle accidents and fatalities; fires due to dangerous use of heaters and other winter weather fatalities.

Threats such as hypothermia and frostbite, can lead to loss of fingers and toes or cause permanent kidney, pancreas and liver injury, even death. You must prepare properly to avoid these extreme dangers.



When Outside

- Dress warmly with layers of loose-fitting light weight clothing and stay dry. Wear mittens, hats, scarves, and water repellent coats.
- Cover your mouth to protect your lungs from extremely cold air.
- Avoid overexertion. Cold weather puts an added strain on the heart. Unaccustomed exercise such as shoveling snow or pushing a car can bring on a heart attack or make a preexisting medical condition worse.
- Watch for signs of frostbite or hypothermia.

Equip your vehicle with a winter storm survival kit:

- Cell phone, car charger and extra battery.
- Blanket/sleeping bag.
- Flashlight with extra batteries.
- First aid kit, tool kit.
- High-calorie, non-perishable food, water.
- Extra clothing to keep dry.
- Tissues or paper towels.
- Sack of sand or cat litter for traction.
- Windshield scraper and brush.
- Battery booster cables.
- Compass and road maps.

When Ice Becomes the Problem

Heavy accumulations of ice can bring down trees and topple utility poles and communication towers disrupting communications and power for days. Even small accumulations of ice can be extremely dangerous to motorists and pedestrians. Bridges and overpasses are particularly dangerous because they freeze before other surfaces.

Guard Against Frostbite, Hypothermia

- Frostbite is a severe reaction to cold exposure that can permanently damage its victims. A loss of feeling and a white or pale appearance in fingers, toes, nose and ear lobes are symptoms of frostbite.
- Hypothermia is a condition brought on when the body temperature drops due to prolonged exposure to temperatures less than 55 degrees Fahrenheit. Symptoms include uncontrollable shivering, slow speech, memory lapses, frequent stumbling, drowsiness and exhaustion.
- If frostbite or hypothermia is suspected, warm the person and seek immediate assistance. Never give a frostbite or hypothermia victim something with caffeine in it (coffee or soft drinks) or alcohol. Caffeine, a stimulant, can cause the heart to beat faster and hasten the effects the cold has on the body. Alcohol, a depressant, can slow the heart and also hasten the ill effects of cold body temperatures.