

 **americares**  

# 5 Steps to Ready

Winter storms can bring combinations of dangerous cold, ice and snow that can cause power outages, unsafe roads and health risks. Protect yourself and your family by following these steps.

## 1. Make a winter weather plan.

- Check the weather and emergency alerts.
- Buy food, medicine and supplies before the storm.
- Plan to stay home during winter storms.
- If you depend on electricity for heat or use electricity-dependent medical equipment, plan for power outages.
  - Know the warmest room in your house.
  - Never use grills, camping stoves or your oven to heat your home.
  - Use generators safely and never run them inside your home or garage.
  - Keep backup batteries charged.
  - Know where your local warming centers/shelters are located.
- Check in on family, friends, and neighbors, especially older adults and people who live alone.
- Know that emergency services may be significantly delayed.

## 2. Build an emergency kit for your home and your car.

For winter weather, you should have two emergency kits: a home kit and a car kit.

### Home Kit:

- Food and water for at least three days. Pick foods you do not need to cook.
- Food and water for pets and anyone with special diet needs.
- Medicine you and your family need.
- Flashlight, batteries, phone chargers and battery powered radio.
- First aid kit.
- Warm clothes, blankets, sleeping bags and hand and foot warmers.
- Cooler (fill with snow to keep medicine or food cold without freezing).

### Car Kit:

- Blankets or sleeping bags and warm clothes.
- Snacks and water.
- First aid kit.
- Flashlight and batteries.
- Phone charger.
- Ice scraper and shovel.
- Sand or cat litter to help with tire grip.
- Bright colored cloth, flag or road flares to signal for help.



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## 3. Protect your home against winter weather damage.

- Make sure your home insurance is up to date and know what kinds of winter damage it covers. Make a video of your house outside and belongings in case you need to file an insurance claim.
- Wrap pipes in cold areas to prevent freezing and know how to shut off your water if a pipe bursts.
- Have someone check your heating system before winter to make sure it works well.
- Seal gaps around doors and windows to keep warm air inside.
- Clean out gutters and downspouts so ice does not build up and damage your roof.
- Cut tree branches near your home and power lines that could break from the weight of ice or snow.
- If you use a fireplace, wood stove, or kerosene heaters, make sure that they vent outside and are not leaking gas indoors.
- Install battery-powered smoke and carbon monoxide alarms. Have fire extinguishers accessible.
- Keep ice melt, sand or cat litter handy to put on icy sidewalks, driveways and steps.
- After heavy snow or ice, watch for signs of roof stress (sticking doors or windows, cracks, sagging), especially on flat roofs or after multiple storms.

## 4. Stay safe during and after a winter storm.

- Stay off the roads during and right after winter storms.
- If you must drive, go slowly as roads may be icy. Keep your gas tank at least half full.
- If you get stuck in your car, stay inside so you stay warm and rescuers can find you more easily.
  - Call 911 and tell them where you are.
  - Turn on your hazard lights and tie something bright to your mirror or antenna.
  - Run the engine for about 10 minutes every hour to warm up and crack a window a little so dangerous fumes do not build up inside.
  - Make sure snow is not blocking your tailpipe.
  - Move your arms and legs occasionally to keep your blood flowing.
- Be very careful walking on ice and snow.
- Be cautious when shoveling snow. Go slowly, take breaks, and push snow instead of lifting it.
- If you have heart problems or are at risk, avoid shoveling.
- Watch for signs of frostbite (numbness, white or gray skin) and hypothermia (shivering, confusion, slurred speech). Get medical help right away.

## 5. Stay informed.

- Sign up to get emergency alerts on your phone. An early warning gives you time to get ready.
- Inform your family, friends and neighbors. Advanced notice could help them prepare.
- Download the FEMA app and the NOAA Weather Radio app for emergency alerts. Learn more at [ready.gov/winter-weather](https://ready.gov/winter-weather) and [cdc.gov/winter-weather](https://cdc.gov/winter-weather).