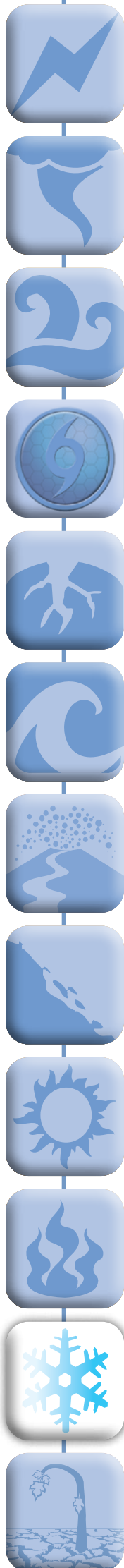




# WINTER STORMS AND EXTREME COLD



## WHAT IS A WINTER STORM?

A severe winter storm is a storm that drops four or more inches of snow during a 12-hour period, or six or more inches during a 24-hour span.

### WINTER STORM FACTS

- All winter storms are accompanied by low temperatures and blowing snow which can severely reduce visibility.
- A winter storm can range from moderate snow over a few hours to blizzard conditions with blinding wind-driven snow that lasts several days.
- Elderly people account for the largest percentage of hypothermia victims. Many older Americans literally “freeze to death” in their own homes after being exposed to dangerously cold indoor temperatures, or are asphyxiated because of improper use of fuels such as charcoal briquettes which produce carbon monoxide.

## KNOW THE TERMS

**Winter Storm Watch** - Indicates that severe weather may affect your area.

**Winter Storm Warning** - Indicates that a winter storm is occurring, or will occur in your area.

**Freezing Rain** - Rain that freezes when it hits the ground creating a coating of ice on roads, walkways, trees, and power lines.

**Sleet** - Turns to ice pellets before reaching the ground. Sleet also causes moisture on roads to freeze and become slippery.

**Wind Chill** - Calculation of how cold it feels outside when the effects of temperature and wind speed are combined.

**Blizzard Warning** - Sustained winds or frequent gusts to 35 miles per hour or greater and considerable amounts of falling or blowing snow are expected for a period of three hours or longer.

**Frost/Freeze Warning** - Below freezing temperatures are expected.

**Heavy Snowfalls** - Snow accumulation of four inches in a 12-hour period or six inches in a 24-hour period.

**Ice Storms** - Occur when freezing rain falls from clouds and freezes immediately when it touches the ground.

**Frostbite** - A condition where localized, sometimes permanent, damage occurs to skin and other tissue due to extreme cold. Symptoms of frostbite include a loss of feeling and a white or pale appearance in extremities such as fingers, toes, tip of the nose, and ear lobes.

**Hypothermia** - A condition brought on when the body temperature drops to less than 90 degrees Fahrenheit. Symptoms of hypothermia include uncontrollable shivering, slow speech, memory lapses, frequent stumbling, drowsiness, and exhaustion.

• If frostbite or hypothermia is suspected, begin warming the person slowly and seek immediate medical assistance. Warm the person's trunk first and use your own body heat to help. Arms and legs should be warmed last, because stimulation of the limbs can drive cold blood toward the heart which can lead to heart failure.

• Never give a frostbite or hypothermia victim caffeine (like coffee or tea) 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.

### DANGER ZONES

- While the worst snowstorms typically occur in the northern U.S., they can happen almost anywhere.
- Extreme cold temperatures are a concern nationwide, even in tropical climates such as Florida.

### DID YOU KNOW...

*70 percent of winter deaths related to snow and ice occur in automobiles.*

*Also a blanket or rug under the front of a tire will help “unstick” a vehicle by increasing traction. It can be used on walkways to prevent slipping and it provides traction under wheels of vehicles stuck in ice and snow.*

## ACTIONS TO CONSIDER

### BEFORE

- Ensure your walls/attic are properly insulated.
- Caulk and weather-strip doors and windows.
- Install storm windows or cover windows with plastic from the inside.
- Keep pipes from freezing: wrap pipes in insulation or layers of old newspapers; cover the newspapers with plastic to keep out moisture; let faucets drip a little to avoid freezing; know how to shut off water valves.
- Acquire safe emergency heating equipment.
- Install and check smoke and CO<sub>2</sub> detectors.

### Winter Driving

- Keep a windshield scraper and small broom for ice and snow removal.
- Maintain a full tank of gas during the winter season.
- Install winter tires with plenty of tread and install snow chains as necessary.
- Listen to the radio or call the state highway patrol for the latest road conditions before travelling. Always travel during daylight and, if possible, take at least one other person and keep others informed of your schedule.
- When feasible, use public transportation if you must go out during a winter storm.
- Above all, wear warm, layered clothing! Be sure to include gloves and the appropriate footwear and headwear protection.

### DURING

#### If Indoors

- Stay indoors and dress warmly.
- Conserve fuel. Lower the thermostat to 65 degrees during the day and 55 degrees at night. Close off unused 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).
- Listen to local radio or television for the latest updates.

#### If Outdoors

- Dress warmly wearing loose-fitting, layered, light-weight clothing and try to stay dry. Wet clothing loses its insulating value rapidly.
- If you go out to shovel snow, do a few stretching exercises to warm up your body.
- Avoid overexertion; cold weather puts an added strain on the heart. Unaccustomed exercise such as shoveling snow or pushing a vehicle can cause a heart attack or make other medical conditions worse. Remember to take frequent breaks when performing strenuous activities.
- Cover your mouth to protect your lungs from extremely cold air.
- Be on the lookout for symptoms of frostbite and hypothermia.

### If in a Vehicle

- Stay in your vehicle. Do not leave the vehicle to search for assistance unless you see a building close by where you know you can take shelter.
- Display a trouble sign. Hang a brightly colored cloth on the radio antenna.
- Occasionally run the engine (for about 10 minutes each hour) to keep warm. Beware of carbon monoxide poisoning. Keep the exhaust pipe clear of snow and open a downwind window slightly for ventilation.
- Turn on the dome light at night.
- Do minor exercises to keep circulation flowing. Clap hands and move arms and legs occasionally. Try not to stay in one position too long.
- Huddle together for warmth. Use newspapers, maps, and even removable vehicle mats for added protection.

### AFTER

- Notify friends or family of your condition.
- Use phone service sparingly.
- Monitor local radio and television stations for the latest information.
- Help a neighbor who may require special assistance – large families, children, elderly, and individuals with disabilities.

Contact your Installation Office of Emergency Management for further information.

