

FEMA advises preparing now for blizzard conditions

News

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As officials from the National Weather Service and the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Region VII office continue monitoring the development of what could be the most powerful winter storm the central U.S. has seen since 2011, residents are encouraged to act now, preparing both their homes and their families for whatever may arise.

"We are watching what could become a very intense and potentially dangerous winter storm, complete with a significant accumulation of ice and snow, high winds, and bitterly cold temperatures," said FEMA Region VII Administrator Beth Freeman.

"Residents should take this storm seriously and stay informed; the current forecast serves as a very real reminder, disasters - including severe winter weather, can strike anytime, anywhere. Its critical people remain prepared throughout the year and www.Ready.gov can help you do just that."

Take Protective Measures Before Winter Storms and Extreme Cold ; Develop a family disaster plan or modify an existing plan to account for winter weather related hazards. Understand the winter weather-related risks in your area; different areas have different risks associated with winter storms.

Citizens should get familiar with the terms that are used to identify a winter storm hazard and discuss with your family what to do if a winter storm watch or warning is issued. Terms used to describe a winter storm hazard may include:

Freezing Rain creates a coating of ice on roads and walkways.

Sleet is rain that turns to ice pellets before reaching the ground. Sleet also causes roads to freeze and become slippery.

Winter Weather Advisory means cold, ice and snow are expected.

Winter Storm Watch means severe weather such as heavy snow or ice is possible in the next day or two.

Winter Storm Warning means severe winter conditions have begun or will begin very soon.

Create an emergency supply kit that includes a three-day supply of food and water, a battery-powered or hand-crank radio and extra flashlights and batteries. Thoroughly check and update your family's emergency supply kit and add the following supplies in preparation for winter weather:

Rock salt to melt ice on walkways; Sand to improve traction; Snow shovels and other snow removal equipment; and adequate clothing and blankets to help keep you warm.

Ensure your family preparedness plan and contacts are up to date and exercise your plan. Learn about the emergency plans that have been established in your area by your state and local government, and ensure your home and car are prepared for the winter weather.

Emergency Response and Exercising Caution In the Aftermath of Winter Storms When winter storms hit, the first responders are local emergency and public works personnel, volunteers, humanitarian organizations, and numerous private interest groups. This collection of agencies helps provide emergency assistance required to protect the public's health and safety to meet immediate needs.

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FEMA has pre-staged emergency commodities across the United States should they be needed to support state and local emergency response operations.

Residents should follow the instructions of state, local and tribal officials and listen to local radio or TV stations for updated emergency information. If you are told to stay off the roads, stay home, and when it is safe, check on your neighbors or friends nearby who may need assistance or extra support. Older adults and individuals who are dependent on life-sustaining medical equipment or assistive devices such as a ventilator or mobility devices, may need additional support in areas that have lost power.

Important Tips to Remember:

Severe winter weather can include snow or subfreezing temperatures, strong winds and ice or heavy rain storms. Avoid traveling by car, but if you must, make sure you have an emergency supply kit in the trunk of your car. FEMA urges families to maintain an emergency supply kit both at home and in the car to help prepare for winter power outages and icy or impassable roads.

Do not put your family at risk. Follow these important safety tips from the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), FEMA and the U.S. Fire Administration (USFA) in the aftermath of the storm:

Portable Generators:

Never use a generator inside a home, basement, shed or garage even if doors and windows are open. Keep generators outside and far away from windows, doors and vents. Read both the label on your generator and the owner's manual and follow the instructions. Any electrical cables you use with the generator should be free of damage and suitable for outdoor use.

Charcoal Grills and Camp Stoves:

Never use charcoal grills or camp stoves indoors. Deaths have occurred when consumers burned charcoal or used camp stoves in enclosed spaces, which produced lethal levels of carbon monoxide.

CO Alarms:

Install carbon monoxide alarms immediately outside each sleeping area and on every level of the home to protect against CO poisoning. Change the alarms' batteries every year.

Electrical Safety:

Stay away from any downed wires, including cable TV feeds. They may be live with deadly voltage.

Candles:

Use caution with candles. If possible, use flashlights instead. If you must use candles, do not burn them on or near anything that can catch fire. Never leave burning candles unattended. Extinguish candles when you leave the room.

For more information and winter safety tips, please visit:

www.ready.gov/america/beinformed/winter.html or www.listo.gov to find out how you can prepare your family for winter storms and other disasters.

Follow FEMA online at www.twitter.com/fema, www.facebook.com/fema, and www.youtube.com/fema. Find regional updates from FEMA Region VII at www.twitter.com/femaregion7. Also, follow Administrator Craig Fugate's activities at www.twitter.com/craigatfema. The social media links provided are for reference only. FEMA does

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not endorse any non-government websites, companies or applications.

FEMA's mission is to support our citizens and first responders to ensure that as a nation we work together to build, sustain, and improve our capability to prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate all hazards.