



TOWNSHIPS TODAY

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER
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When the Weather Outside is Frightful, Do You Know What to Do?

While no one can predict with any certainty what Mother Nature has up her sleeve this winter, we do know this: Pennsylvania is going to get snow, chilly temperatures, some freezing rain, and maybe even a blizzard — and everyone needs to be prepared.

The following safety information is courtesy of **ready.gov**, the official website of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security:

Understanding what's on the way

When winter arrives, meteorologists and newscasters toss around many terms. You know they mean something, but what? Here's an explanation and what you should do:

Winter weather advisory — The National Weather Service (NWS) issues these advisories when conditions are expected to cause significant inconveniences that may be hazardous. If caution is used, these situations should not be life-threatening.

Winter storm watch — The NWS issues these watches when severe winter conditions, such as heavy snow or ice, may affect your area; however, the location and timing are still uncertain. Watches are issued 12 to 36 hours before a potentially severe



Sure, you may love to watch the snow fall from the comfort of a cozy chair, but winter is filled with many hidden dangers, too. Carbon monoxide poisoning, overexertion from shoveling, and perilous driving conditions are just a few. Now is the time to prepare for what lies ahead.

storm. Keep on top of the situation by tuning into NOAA weather radio, local radio and TV stations, and other news sources. Also, monitor alerts, check your emergency supplies, and gather any items you may need if you lose power.

Winter storm warning — Life-threatening, severe winter conditions have begun or will begin within 24 hours. People in the warning area should take precautions immediately.

Blizzard warning — These warnings indicate that sustained winds and gusts of 35 miles per hour or more and considerable falling or blowing snow are expected to prevail for three hours or more. Again, people should take precautions.

Make winter safety a priority

Whether you're inside or out, use the following four tips to protect your family and yourself when winter weather arrives:

1) *Realize that carbon monoxide can kill.*

Each year, an estimated 430 Americans die from unintentional carbon monoxide poisoning.

These deaths — at their highest during colder months — are likely due to the increased use of gas-powered furnaces and the inappropriate use of alternative heating, cooking, and power sources indoors during power outages.

To limit your risk, take these precautions:

- Never use a generator, grill, camp stove, or other gasoline, propane, natural gas, or charcoal-burning device inside a home, garage, basement, crawlspace, or any partially enclosed area. Be sure to keep these devices outside and at least 20 feet from doors, windows, and vents.

- Install carbon monoxide alarms in central locations on every level of your home and outside sleeping areas to provide early warning of accumulating carbon monoxide. If the carbon monoxide alarm sounds, find a location with fresh air quickly, such as an open window or door, and call for help.

2) *If you have to go outside or drive, use common sense.*

- Wear several layers of loose-fitting, lightweight, warm clothing, rather than one layer of heavy clothing. The outer garments should be tightly woven and water-repellent.

- Wear mittens, which are warmer than gloves, and a hat to prevent the loss of body heat. Also, cover your mouth with a scarf to protect your lungs.

- When shoveling snow, avoid overexertion, which can trigger a heart attack — a major cause of death in the winter. Be sure to take breaks, push the snow instead of lifting it, and lift lighter loads.

- Keep dry by changing wet clothing frequently to prevent the loss of body heat.

- If you must drive, travel during the day with

someone else and stay on the main roads. Share your destination, route, and expected arrival time with others so if your vehicle gets stuck, they can send help along your predetermined route.

- If a blizzard traps you in the vehicle, pull off the road, turn on the hazard lights, and hang a distress flag from the radio antenna or window.

Do not leave the vehicle unless you can see a building nearby to take shelter. Keep in mind, however, that blowing snow distorts distances so a building may seem close, but may in fact be too far away to reach in deep snow.

Run the engine and heater about 10 minutes each hour to keep warm. Be sure to open a downwind window slightly for ventilation and periodically clear snow from the exhaust pipe to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning.

In extreme cold, use road maps, seat covers, and floor mats for insulation. Huddle with the other passengers, use your coats for blankets, and take turns sleeping. One person should always be awake to look for rescue crews. Also, if food and non-alcoholic beverages are available, eat regularly and drink ample fluids to avoid dehydration.

Balance your electrical needs — the use of lights, heat, cell phone, and radio — with your supply. At night, however, turn on the inside light of the vehicle so work crews or rescuers can find you.

3) *Learn the difference between frostbite and hypothermia.*

Frostbite occurs when the skin and body tissue just beneath it freezes. Symptoms include a loss of feeling and a white or pale appearance in the extremities, such as fingers, toes, earlobes, face, and the tip of the nose.

Hypothermia, on the other hand, is a dangerously low body temperature. The symptoms are uncontrollable shivering, memory loss, disorientation, incoherence, slurred speech, drowsiness, and apparent exhaustion.

- **What to do for frostbite:** Cover exposed skin but do not rub the affected area in an attempt to warm it. Seek medical help immediately.

- **What to do for hypothermia:** If you suspect that someone has hypothermia, take his temperature. If it is below 95 degrees, seek medical attention immediately. Get the victim to a warm location, remove his wet clothing, and warm the center of the body first by wrapping the person in blankets or putting him in dry clothing. If the victim is conscious, give him warm, non-alcoholic beverages.

4) *Learn from every storm.*

Always restock your emergency supplies so that you're ready when the next storm hits. Also, be sure to ask yourself: What could we have done better?

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