

Texans with Disabilities Preparedness for Cold Weather

Texans who are particularly vulnerable to exposure from freezing temperatures, such as the elderly and those with disabilities, should organize activities outside of their home so that they go out in the warmest part of the day. Texans who are paralyzed from the chest or waist down and individuals who have difficulty sensing and maintaining heat in their extremities are at risk for severe frostbite and need to protect their feet, pelvic areas, and hands because of circulation problems. It is important to dress for the weather by wearing several layers of clothes, keeping one's head, neck, and chest covered with scarves, and wearing two pairs of thick socks under lined boots. Texans using a wheelchair should wrap a blanket over their pelvic region and limit their amount of time outside.

To enable the full functioning of driving adaptation equipment in motor vehicles, allow your vehicle to warm up before you get in them. Service animals should wear a coat or cape underneath their regular harness and should sit or lay on a blanket in the vehicle or on cold floors inside your home or place of destination. Sometimes it is helpful in snow to protect your dog's paws with boots or be sure to warm feet and clean any debris once inside.

Pneumatic tires provide better traction for wheelchairs on icy surfaces. Tires for dirt bikes (sold through bicycle shops) can be used as an alternative on icy surfaces. Ramps should be cleared of ice by using standard table salt or cat litter, as rock salt is poisonous to service dogs. Rock salt can also be slippery for certain types of mobility aides. Freezing rain will stick to canes, walkers, fore arm cuffs, and wheelchairs making the metal parts slippery and cold to touch. Driving gloves which grip can be helpful. When returning wheelchairs to vehicles, it is important to first remove the tires and shake the debris and ice off of them. The tire rims, and other metal parts that may have any salt or other de-icing chemicals on them need to be wiped off to avoid rust on the metal parts.

Public Health Interventions

Educating communities about preventive steps that they can be taken both in advance of winter and once a storm has begun will help reduce the impact. Winter storm preparation activities should include:

- Home winterization activities (insulating pipes, installing storm windows).
- Collect winter clothing and supplies such as extra blankets, warm coats and clothes, water-resistant boots, hats and mittens.
- Assemble a disaster supplies kit containing a first aid kit, battery powered weather radio, flashlight, and extra batteries.
- Stock canned food, non-electric can opener, and bottled water.
- Winterize vehicles, keep gas tank full, and assemble a disaster supplies car kit.
- In heavy snow, stay away from downed power lines.

Winter Weather Checklists (CDC guidance)

Stock up on emergency supplies for communication, food, safety, heating, and car in case a storm hits.

Communication Checklist

- Make sure you have at least one of the following in case there is a power failure:
 - Battery-powered radio (for listening to local emergency instructions). Have extra batteries.
 - National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) weather radio receiver (for listening to National Weather Service broadcasts). See www.nws.noaa.gov/nwr for more information.
- Find out how your community warns the public about severe weather:
 - Siren
 - Radio
 - TV
- Listen to emergency broadcasts.
- Know what winter storm warning terms mean:
 - Winter weather advisory: expect winter weather conditions to cause inconvenience and hazards.
 - Frost/freeze warning: expect below-freezing temperatures.
 - Winter storm watch: be alert; a storm is likely.
 - Winter storm warning: take action; the storm is in or entering the area.
 - Blizzard warning: seek refuge immediately! Snow and strong winds, near-zero visibility, deep snow drifts, and life-threatening wind chill.

Food and Safety Checklist

Have a week's worth of food and safety supplies. If you live far from other people, have more supplies on hand.

- Drinking water
- Canned/no-cook food (bread, crackers, dried fruits)
- Non-electric can opener

- Baby food and formula (if baby in the household)
- Prescription drugs and other medicine
- First-aid kit
- Rock-salt to melt ice on walkways
- Supply of cat litter or bag of sand to add traction on walkways
- Flashlight and extra batteries
- Battery-powered lamps or lanterns
(To prevent the risk of fire, avoid using candles.)

Water Checklist

- Leave all water taps slightly open so they drip continuously.
- Keep the indoor temperature warm.
- Allow more heated air near pipes. Open kitchen cabinet doors under the kitchen sink.
- If your pipes do freeze, do not thaw them with a torch. Thaw the pipes slowly with warm air from an electric hair dryer.
- If you cannot thaw your pipes, or if the pipes have broken open, use bottled water or get water from a neighbor's home.
- Have bottled water on hand.
- In an emergency—if no other water is available—snow can be melted for water. Bringing water to a rolling boil for one minute will kill most germs but won't get rid of chemicals sometimes found in snow.

Heating Checklist

- Have at least one of the following heat sources in case the power goes out:
 - Fireplace with plenty of dry firewood or gas log fireplace
 - Portable space heaters or kerosene heaters
- Check with your local fire department to make sure that kerosene heaters are legal in your area.
- Never place a space heater on top of furniture or near water.
- Use electric space heaters with
 - automatic shut-off switches and
 - nonglowing elements.

- Keep heat sources at least 3 feet away from furniture and drapes.
- Never leave children unattended near a space heater.
- Have the following safety equipment:
 - Chemical fire extinguisher
 - Smoke alarm in working order (Check once a month and change batteries once a year.)
 - Carbon monoxide detector
- Never use an electric generator indoors, inside the garage, or near the air intake of your home because of the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning:
 - Do not use the generator or appliances if they are wet.
 - Do not store gasoline indoors where the fumes could ignite.
 - Use individual heavy-duty, outdoor-rated cords to plug in other appliances.

Cooking and Lighting Checklist

- Never use charcoal grills or portable gas camp stove indoors—the fumes are deadly.
- Use battery-powered flashlights or lanterns.
- Avoid using candles.
- Never leave lit candles alone.

Car and Emergency Checklist

- Cell phone; portable charger and extra batteries
- Shovel
- Windshield scraper
- Battery-powered radio (and extra batteries)
- Flashlight (and extra batteries)
- Water
- Snack food
- Extra hats, coats, mittens
- Blankets
- Chains or rope
- Tire chains

- Canned compressed air with sealant (emergency tire repair)
- Road salt and sand
- Booster cables
- Emergency flares
- Bright colored flag; help signs
- First aid kit
- Tool kit
- Road maps
- Compass
- Waterproof matches and a can (to melt snow for water)
- Paper towels

🌐 **Full PDF of Extreme Cold:**

http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/winter/pdf/cold_guide.pdf

🌐 **HTML files of Extreme Cold:**

<http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/winter/guide.asp>