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**A Little Winter Storm Preparedness Goes a Long Way!**

Even as we celebrate the beginning of a new year filled with promise, we tend to keep our eyes to the sky and our ears to the local weather forecast. Up and down the eastern half of the U.S., and across most of the country, January is the snowiest month of the year. The chances of a winter storm increase greatly, temperatures plummet and dangers on the road and in the home increase.

On average, more than [116,000](http://ops.fhwa.dot.gov/weather/weather_events/snow_ice.htm) Americans are injured and over [1,300](http://ops.fhwa.dot.gov/weather/weather_events/snow_ice.htm) are killed on snowy, slushy or icy pavement every winter. If you find yourself driving in a snowstorm, these tips from the *National Highway Safety Administration* will help you safely reach your destination:

**Prepare Your Vehicle**

In winter, pay special attention to your vehicle’s battery, wipers, coolant, tires and other systems that can take a beating when the temperature drops. If you’re using snow tires, have them installed before the snow begins to fall. When you know your vehicle is ready for the road, clear your car of snow, ice or dirt from the windows, forward sensors, headlights, tail lights and backup camera.

**Prepare Yourself**

Drive slowly. It’s harder to control or stop your vehicle on a slick or snow-covered road. Increase your following distance enough so that you'll have plenty of time to stop for vehicles ahead of you take the time to learn how your car handles under winter weather driving conditions. Before heading out, know the weather and traffic conditions, and plan your route accordingly. Give yourself more time to get where you’re going because you’ll be driving more slowly in inclement weather.

**Prepare for an Emergency**

Make sure your vehicle is stocked to help get you out of trouble or to keep you safe until help arrives. Keep blankets, flashlights, jumper cables, and flares or emergency lights in your vehicle. Even if you don’t need them, they can be used to help someone else in need on the road.

Keeping your home prepared for winter storms is essential to ensure your family’s safety and to minimize any possible damage to the home itself. According to the Insurance Information Institute, winter storms are the third largest cause of catastrophe losses, ranking right behind hurricanes and tornados.

**When a Winter Storm is on the Way**

Make sure your snow shovels are in good condition. A good snow shovel will not only remove snow more efficiently, it will make the chore of shoveling much easier. Keep rock salt and sand in stock! If you have pets, there are several types of rock salt that are safe for pets. Sand will help with traction if you have trouble getting out of your driveway. Have a snowblower or plow? Make sure your equipment is in working condition and is ready to go when the storm hits. Keep extra containers of gasoline in a safe place! Make sure you use only approved containers and store them away from children and any flammable materials. How’s your heating fuel? If you need fuel, don’t wait until the storm is approaching to order it. In the event that you lose power, it is a good idea to have fire wood for wood burning stoves or fireplaces, or a generator and fuel. Never leave a fire unattended and never run a generator inside your home, including the garage!

In case of a power outage or loss of heat, make sure you have blankets and warm clothes on hand for easy access. It is important to have food and water in the home in the event that the storm is bad enough to prevent venturing outside. Extra batteries and flashlights are important to have on hand. If you must use candles, never leave the room while they are lit! Be sure to extinguish them before retiring for the evening or venturing outside.

**When the Storm Hits**

The best thing to do when a winter storm hits is stay inside! If you must venture out, please be sure to walk carefully to avoid slipping on ice or snow. If shoveling, remember to lift with your knees, take frequent breaks and stay hydrated. Change wet clothing and be able to recognize the signs of frostbite, which include loss of feeling, and pale or white extremities. Help your fire department by keeping fire hydrants easily accessible and clear of snow. Don’t leave your pets out for extended periods of time! They get cold too!

By making a few easy preparations, your family will be able to ride out any winter storm in relative comfort and safety…and remember, Spring is only three months away!

**Insert your Department name** relies on brave men and women to volunteer their time to serve as volunteer firefighters to ensure that every call for help is answered. Men and women with almost every skill set are needed. To learn more about volunteer opportunities, please contact **Insert your Department name at Insert website** or call **Insert your Dept. phone number**.

There are volunteer opportunities at your local volunteer fire department for citizens willing to work hard. To learn more about becoming a volunteer firefighter and joining your local volunteer fire department, please visit [www.VolunteerFireTN.org](http://www.VolunteerFireTN.org).

***About the Tennessee Fire Chiefs Association, Inc. (TFCA)****The TFCA provides leadership to career and volunteer Fire Chiefs, Chief Fire Officers and managers of emergency service organizations throughout the State of Tennessee through vision, information, education, service and representation to enhance their knowledge, skills, and abilities. The TN Fire Chiefs Association (TFCA) also encourages the professional advancement of the fire service to ensure and maintain greater protection of life and property from fire and natural or man-made disasters. The TFCA’s mission is to provide leadership to career and volunteer chiefs, chief fire officers, and managers of Emergency Service Organizations throughout the State of Tennessee through vision, information, education, service and representation to enhance their professionalism and capabilities. More information about the TFCA is located at* [*www.tnfirechiefs.com*](http://www.tnfirechiefs.com) *.*

***About Volunteer Workforce Solutions (VWS)****The Tennessee Fire Chiefs Association was awarded a SAFER recruitment and retention grant in 2016 and partnered with the* [*International Association of Fire Chiefs*](https://www.iafc.org/about-iafc/positions/position/iafc-position-human-dignity) *to identify recruitment and retention goals, strategies and marketing methodologies that would benefit not only participating departments, but all fire departments in the state. 19 departmental groups, consisting of 64 departments, were selected to participate in Phase I of the program. The VWS program is also operating in Virginia through the Virginia Fire Chiefs Association and Connecticut through the Connecticut Fire Chiefs Association. There is also currently a National VWS effort focusing on diversity and new trainings. More information about the Tennessee VWS can be found at* [*www.VolunteerFireTN.org*](http://www.VolunteerFireTN.org)*.*

*(Insert info about your department in similar format to above)*