



Or Not?



Office of Emergency Management, City of Philadelphia

A Winter Weather Guide

Winter weather can bring heavy snow, icy streets and sidewalks, dangerous wind chills, and power outages.

Be Ready. Make a Plan. Get what you need.

- Are you and your family prepared for winter emergencies?
- If you had to stay in your home for a few days, would you have what you need to stay safe, comfortable and healthy?
- If you had to leave your home suddenly, without time to pack anything, would you be ready to go?

The time to start planning for an emergency is not in the middle of one.

In an emergency, you're either READY or you're not.

For more information on how to get READY, visit www.phila.gov/ready or email us at oem@phila.gov.

Be Ready.

Make a Plan.

Get what you need.



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Winter Emergency Kit

If there is a bad storm, you might not be able to leave the house for a few days.

- Check your emergency kit supplies now before a storm hits.
- Make sure you have enough food, water, and medications for at least three days.
- Remind everyone in your household that these supplies are for emergencies only.
- Check expiration dates on food, bottled water, batteries, and medicine.

Items for Your Emergency Kit:

- One gallon of drinking water per person per day for three days
- Food that will not easily perish; ready-to-eat foods
- Manual can opener
- First-aid kit
- A three-day supply of essential medications
- Flashlight and extra batteries
- Battery-operated AM/FM radio and extra batteries, or a wind-up radio that does not require batteries.
- Phone that does not rely on electricity, but just plugs into a phone jack
- A whistle to signal for help
- Personal hygiene items, such as hand sanitizer, soap, toothbrush and toothpaste, toilet paper, and wipes
- Child care supplies or other special care items
- Plastic sheeting, scissors, duct tape
- Trash bags and other tools

Also consider other supplies and equipment based on your special needs, such as:

- Back-up medical equipment (oxygen, scooter battery, mobility aids, hearing aids and batteries, glasses).
- Supplies for pets and service animals



Keep Your Body Warm

Your age, your health, your eating and drinking habits, and your clothing all contribute to how warm or cold you feel. Check on children and seniors, especially in cold weather.

Here are some tips for keeping warm:

- Set your thermostat to 68° F or higher.
- Dress in several layers. Wear loose fitting, lightweight clothing.
- If you have no heat because of a power outage, try to stay with a friend or relative.

Hypothermia is a life-threatening condition with abnormally low body temperature. Depending on age and health, a person might not realize his or her core body temperature has fallen dangerously low.

Symptoms of Hypothermia include:

- Uncontrollable shivering
- Confusion or sleepiness
- Slurred speech
- Slow reactions

If You Suspect Hypothermia:

- Get the victim to a warm room or shelter.
- Remove any wet clothing.
- Warm the center of the body first, so blood circulation will increase to the extremities.
- Give the victim warm drinks, but no alcohol.
- Get medical help as soon as possible.



When You're Outside

Dress warmly in layers and stay dry. Wear hats, scarves, and water-repellent coats. Wear mittens instead of gloves; they'll keep your hands warmer.

Cover your mouth. Protect your lungs from extremely cold air by covering your mouth.

Wind Chill makes you get colder faster, as the wind carries away heat from the body. Make sure small children stay warm - especially babies. Babies will get colder much faster than adults will.

Frostbite is frozen body tissue, usually skin. It affects the extremities first: fingers, toes, ears, and the tip of the nose.

Symptoms of frostbite include:

- The skin might lose feeling.
- The skin may look white, pale, hard or waxy.
- As the area thaws, skin may turn red, blue or purple.
- Skin can also swell or blister.
- The victim may also feel tingling, burning or severe pain as the frostbitten tissue thaws.

Children lose body heat faster than adults do, so they can get frostbite faster.

If You Suspect Frostbite:

- Get the victim to a warm room or shelter.
- Give the victim warm drinks, but no alcohol.
- Remove any wet clothing.
- Don't walk on frostbitten feet or toes. Doing so can cause more damage.
- Warm the affected areas in warm (not hot) water, or with warm blankets.
- Don't rub frostbitten skin.
- Don't use a heating pad, heat lamp, or heat from a stove, fireplace or radiator to warm the frostbitten areas. Numb body parts can't feel the heat, and can get burned.
- If skin color and feeling don't return to normal quickly, get medical help as soon as possible.

Snow Shoveling Safety Tips

- Avoid overexertion. Cold weather puts an added strain on the heart. Take frequent rest breaks and drink plenty of fluids to avoid dehydration.
- Warm up with some stretching exercises inside.
- Start slowly and pace yourself. Shovel five loads only a minute. After 15 minutes of shoveling, take a break. Pause to stretch every five minutes by standing up straight.
- Push the snow. Don't lift. If you must lift, use your legs not your back.
- Drink during breaks to avoid dehydration. Breathing cold dry air robs moisture from your body with every breath.
- Never throw snow over your shoulder. Twisting can strain the back. Face the snow being shoveled, keep your back straight and knees bent and throw in front of you.
- Dress warmly in layers with a hat. Cover your neck.
- Take smaller scoops of snow, keeping them light and small.
- Don't work up a sweat. Bodies lose heat faster in damp clothes, which makes you more prone to injury. Take a break if you're beginning to sweat.
- Don't smoke or eat a heavy meal before shoveling. It's harder on the heart.
- Don't hold your breath; this makes your heart rate and blood pressure rise.



- Don't feel the job has to get done in one session.
- Do clear snow in front of fire hydrants and storm drains when clearing sidewalks and driveways.
- Remember to help your neighbors, especially older adults, people with disabilities, and those who are house bound.

Shoveling Snow from Sidewalks



Owners, building managers, and tenants of any building or premise must clear a path at least 36 inches wide on all sidewalks around the building. Remember to make a path within six hours after the snow stops falling. Thoroughly clear the path of ice and snow.

If a pavement is less than three feet from the property line to the curb, clear a path that is at least 12 inches wide. For multifamily dwellings, the owner or agent is responsible for shoveling a clear path and keeping it clear of ice and snow.

Keep snow cleared from sidewalks and driveways out of the street. Shoveling and piling snow into the street can result in a minimum fine of \$25 and up to \$300 for each violation.

Salting Sidewalks and Driveways

Any commercial deicer, such as those sold in hardware stores and supermarkets, is okay for salting sidewalks and driveways.

Apply salt as soon as there is a light buildup of snow on sidewalks and driveways. It will be easier to shovel later if more snow falls. After shoveling additional snow that falls, apply a light amount of salt, again. This will melt any more snow that falls. When it is sleeting or freezing rain, apply deicing salt multiple times, as needed, on sidewalks and driveways.



Be aware of the environment. Use deicing salts sparingly. One pound of salt covers 100 to 200 square feet. You can treat a sidewalk that is 30 to 60 feet long and three-foot wide at this rate. Spread the deicing salt manually or use equipment, such as lawn seed and fertilizer spreaders. Rinse spreaders after applying the deicer. You can use kitty litter also to make temporary traction.



Pets and Cold Weather

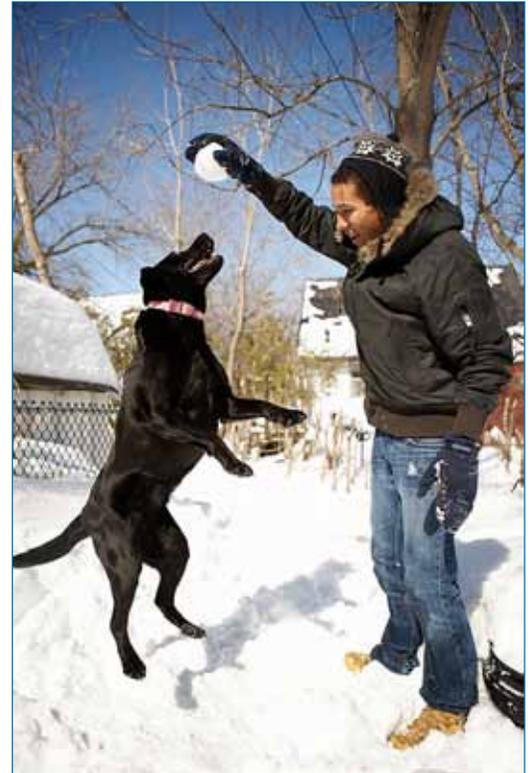
The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals offers these tips to help you protect your pets when the mercury dips.

Call ACCT Philly hotline at 267-385-3800 if you see a dog or other pet outside during extreme cold. It is against City ordinance to leave pets outside in extreme cold and owners can be fined up to \$500.

- Keep cats inside. Cats can freeze outdoors. They can become lost, be stolen, injured or killed. Cats, who stray, get infectious diseases, including rabies, from other cats, dogs, and wildlife.
- During the winter, outdoor cats may sleep under car hoods. When you start the motor, the fan belt may injure or kill the cat. If outdoor cats are in your area, bang loudly on the hood before starting the engine so the cat can escape safely.
- Never let your dog off the leash on snow or ice, especially during a snowstorm. Dogs can lose their scent and become lost. Make sure your dog always wears ID tags.
- Thoroughly wipe off your dog's legs and stomach when he comes in out of sleet, snow, or ice. He can ingest salt, antifreeze or other potentially dangerous chemicals while licking his paws. Snow and encrusted ice may cause your dog's paw pads to bleed.
- Never shave your dog down to the skin in winter. A longer coat provides more warmth. Dry your dog completely after bathing, especially before taking him out for a walk. Do you own a shorthaired breed? Consider a coat or sweater with a high collar or turtleneck. It should cover the base of the tail to the belly.
- Never leave your dog or cat alone in a car during cold weather. An animal can freeze to death in an unheated car.



- Puppies don't tolerate the cold as well as adult dogs. It may be difficult to housebreak your puppy during winter. If your puppy is sensitive to the weather, try to paper-train him inside. If your dog is sensitive to the cold due to age, illness, or breed type, take him outdoors only to relieve himself.



- Does your dog spend a lot of time doing outdoor activities? Increase his supply of food, particularly protein, to keep him—and his fur—in tip-top shape.
- Like coolant, antifreeze is a lethal poison for dogs and cats. Be sure to clean up any spills from your vehicle. Use products that contain propylene glycol instead of ethylene glycol.
- Make sure your pet has a warm place to sleep, off the floor and away from drafts. A cozy dog or cat bed with a warm blanket or pillow is perfect.



Home Heating Safety Tips

Many fires and emergencies happen every year in Philadelphia because of faulty heating units. Call the Department of Licenses and Inspections at 215-686-2463 for a fire inspection if you are unsure whether your heat source is safe.

If you rent and do not have heat, contact your building owner. If your heat does not come back on within a reasonable time, contact the Department of Licenses and Inspections at 215-686-2463.

- Furnaces, boilers, hot water heaters, and clothes dryers should be working properly, and ventilated. Have a professional inspect them regularly to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning.
- Use electric heaters with extreme caution to prevent shock, fire, and burns. NEVER use a kerosene heater indoors.
- Keep items at least three feet from heat sources, to help prevent fire.
- Never use a gas oven or burner to heat your home.



Heaters

- Have your heating system inspected and serviced before the heating season begins.
- Keep the area around the unit clear and clean filters regularly.
- Make sure that flue pipes, vent connectors, gas vents, and chimneys are inspected, cleaned, and in good repair.

Fireplaces

- Always open the flue in your fireplace before lighting a fire.
- Only burn hardwoods such as oak, maple, or ash in fireplaces.
- If you use synthetic logs, burn only one log at a time. Due to their construction, these logs produce a hotter flame than most firewood.
- Never use lighter fluid, gasoline, or other flammable liquids to start or enhance a fire.
- Chimneys should be professionally inspected each year and cleaned after burning approximately one cord of wood.
- Use a metal screen properly to prevent sparks from flying out.



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Home Heating Safety Tips (continued)

Make Your Home Winter Ready

Portable Heaters

- The Philadelphia Fire Code permits the use of portable kerosene heaters in one and two family dwellings only.
- Portable propane heaters can be used outdoors only.
- When purchasing a new portable heater, select those with the mark of an independent testing laboratory.
- Use and maintain the heater by following manufacturer's instructions.
- Keep heater at least 36 inches away from anything, including furniture, bedding, clothing, pets, and people, that can burn.
- Turn off space heaters when you are not in the room.
- Children and pets should be supervised at all times when space heaters are in use.
- Only use space heaters to heat a room. Never use them to cook food, dry clothes, or heat water for humidification.
- Always keep portable heaters away from the entrance to rooms, in case you need to get out quickly.
- Use only the fuel recommended by the manufacturer. Use only an approved container clearly marked with the name of the fuel.
- Always refill kerosene heaters outside when the unit is cool. Use a siphon pump to prevent spills.
- Never place heater cords under carpeting or furniture.
- Don't use extension cords with electric heaters. If you must use an extension cord, only use a properly rated extension cord that doesn't get hot when in use at the highest setting.
- Always have a working smoke alarm and carbon monoxide detector in rooms where you sleep, especially when using portable heaters. Test the smoke alarm and carbon monoxide detector to make sure they are working properly.



- Insulate walls and attics.
- Caulk and weather-strip doors and windows.
- Install storm windows or cover windows with plastic from the inside.
- Inspect chimneys and fireplaces.
- Always run generators outside. Open windows and fans do not provide enough ventilation to prevent carbon monoxide build-up.

Keep the Water Flowing



Avoid expensive plumbing repairs, costly damage to personal property stored in unheated areas, and keep the water flowing freely in your home in the winter by following these easy-to-do tips to maintain home water systems:

- Shut off outside water faucets from the inside valves. To drain these faucets, leave the outside valves open.
- Keep the area around your water meter above 40 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Wrap your water meter and its connecting pipe with insulation.
- Caulk windows near water meters or pipes. Cover these windows with plastic.
- Replace or cover cracked or broken windows.
- Wrap and insulate all water pipes in unheated areas such as sheds, under kitchen floors, and in garages.
- Let water trickle overnight in extremely cold weather to keep your pipes from freezing.
- If the water service line or other internal pipes freeze or break, call a plumber to thaw the frozen water in the service line or to repair the damaged or broken pipe.



Heating Bill Help

If your income is limited, you may qualify for help with your gas or electric heating bill.

LIHEAP (Low Income Home Energy Assistance) Program

The LIHEAP program can help you pay your home heating bill, whether you own or rent your home. Call 215-560-1583 to get an application.

PECO's Customer Assistance and Referral Evaluation Services (CARES)

Call PECO's 1-800-774-7040 CARES line to find out if you qualify for assistance with your heating bill.