

## Winter Preparation Tips

Fall is my favorite time of year. The kids are back in school. Football season begins. It gets a little cooler and the colors of autumn blanket the rolling hills of Chester County. It's beautiful. In fact, I can only think of one down-side to fall – winter follows.

Such is life. We have to take the bad with the good. Like many of you, the cold bothers me more than it used to and I don't get as excited about snow fall as I did growing up. I now approach winter with more of an objective respect than the wild excitement fresh snow brought as a kid. I now have things to worry about - like getting the driveway cleared and what to do in the event of a power failure. You may have similar concerns. Below are a few things you can do to prepare for the hazards of extreme cold, snow and ice that winter brings.

### Home

- Keep extra food that needs no cooking or refrigeration on hand (bread, crackers, canned goods, baby food, formula, etc.).
- Keep water stored in clean containers (5 gal/person).
- Have an alternative heat source – dry firewood, fuel, etc. **\*\* If using space heaters, please consult the National Fire Protection Association guidelines found on the NFPA website.**
- Have battery-powered lighting, radio & clock, and extra batteries.
- Have extra blankets.
- Have a well-stocked first aid kit.
- Have a snow shovel and rock salt (calcium chloride or similar product should be used on concrete).
- Have a multi-purpose, dry-chemical fire extinguisher.
- Make sure smoke and carbon monoxide detectors are installed and operational; change batteries 2x per year.
- Have your chimney cleaned and serviced.
- Check pipes along perimeters and in crawl spaces. Make sure they are insulated as needed.

### Car

- Have your radiator checked for proper antifreeze levels.
- Refill wiper fluid with a wintertime mixture.
- Replace wiper blades, if necessary.
- Check tire tread and pressure.
- Consult your owner's manual for proper wintertime preparation.
- Keep adequate supplies in your car in case you get stranded. Some items to include are extra blankets, first aid kit, a can and waterproof matches (to melt snow for water), scraper, jumper cables, mobile phone, GPS or maps, compass, bag of sand or cat litter, collapsible shovel, flashlight and batteries, fix-a-flat, bright cloth and high-calorie canned or dried food.

### Personal Safety

Serious health problems can result from prolonged exposure to extreme cold. The most common are hypothermia and frostbite, which are more prevalent in infants and the elderly. The keys to preventing hypothermia and frostbite are primarily: (1) limit exposure to the cold; (2) dress warmly, covering all exposed areas; and (3) stay dry. For more information on these serious health issues, including symptoms and what to do about them, consult a physician or visit the Center for Disease Control website.

Some of these precautions may seem obvious. Some may seem a little ridiculous. But keep in mind, preventive action is the best defense against extreme weather conditions. It's better to take preventive steps now, than to find yourself without power or stranded somewhere, unprepared to fight the elements.

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