Winter Preparedness

(Insert Winter Preparedness Photo)

Each year, winter weather affects North Dakotans on a broad scale, ranging from travel inconvenience to death. However, you can benefit from preparation and making sure you are ready for the wintry season the region is notorious for. Winter storms can give advanced warning or occur suddenly, and a proactive approach, versus a reactive one, can help ensure your safety.

**Terminology**

* **Blizzard Warning –** Issued when an expected blizzard event with sustained winds or frequent gusts greater than 35 mph will accompany blowing snow for three or more hours.
* **Blizzard Watch –** Issued when conditions are favorable for severe winter weather.
* **Freezing Rain –** Precipitation that creates a coating of ice on roads and walkways.
* **Frost/Freeze Warning –** Issued when below freezing temperatures are expected.
* **Hypothermia –** A health hazard when your body temperature sinks below 96 degrees Fahrenheit.
* **Sleet –** Rain that turns to ice pellets before reaching the ground.
* **Wind Chill –** The perceived temperature due to weather conditions.
* **Winter Weather Advisory –** Issued when snow, blowing snow, ice, sleet or a combination of wintry elements are expected but conditions should not be hazardous enough to meet warning criteria. Use cation when driving.
* **Winter Storm Watches –** Issued when conditions are favorable for a significant winter storm event. Heavy sleet, heavy snow, ice storms, blowing snow or a combination of wintry elements are possible.
* **Winter Storm Warning –** Issued for significant winter weather events including snow, ice, sleet, blowing snow or a combination of wintry elements. Travel will become difficult or impossible in some situations. Delay travel plans until conditions improve.

**Communication Plan**

* List contact numbers such as hospitals/clinics, doctors, schools or service providers, as well as family members and neighbors.
* Make sure everyone in your family has a copy of the plan and there is a copy in your home
* Create a list of responsibilities for each person in your family
* Review and practice the plan

**Evacuation**

* Identify a place you can safely warm up should you lose heat in your home
* Check on friends, neighbors, and relatives, particularly if they are elderly or live alone
* Have a destination in mind before leaving
* Dress appropriately for weather conditions

**Shelter in Place**

* Choose to stay a room with as few windows as possible
* Close off unused rooms and stuff towels or rags in cracks under doors.
* Cover windows at night
* Wear enough clothing to remain warm, but avoid sweating
* Listen to a local radio or television station for updated emergency information
* Eat and drink water regularly

**Vehicle Winter Emergency Kit Suggestions**

* Blankets or sleeping bags
* Rain gear
* Extra sets of dry clothing
* Hats and mittens/gloves
* High-energy snacks
* Phone charger
* Batteries
* Shovel
* Sand or kitty litter
* Windshield scraper
* Flashlight
* Chains or rope
* Tire chains
* Jumper cables
* Emergency flares
* Water
* First aid kit
* Spare tire(s)
* Money

**When Traveling**

* Listen to weather reports for your area and areas you’ll be traveling through.
* Let someone know the route you will be taking, your destination and expected arrival time.
* Look for sleet, freezing rain or drizzle which can create icy conditions.
* Accelerate slowly and give yourself room to stop.
* Do not use cruise control in wintry conditions.
* Don’t crowd snow plows.
* Consider alternate traveling plans or cancelling your trip.

**If Stranded**

* Do not leave your vehicle unless help is visible.
* Display a trouble sign or indication you require help.
* Run the vehicle and use the heater occasionally, 10 minutes each hour. Also, turn on vehicle’s lights while the vehicle is running to create more visibility.
* Keep your vehicle’s exhaust pipe clear.
* Lightly exercise and try to keep from remaining motionless.
* If there is more than one person in the vehicle, take turns sleeping.
* If there is more than one person in the vehicle, huddle together for warmth.
* Keep hydrated.
* Avoid overexertion.

**Winterize Your Home**

* Insulate pipes, walls, attics
* Caulking and weather-stripping doors and inserting storm windows or covering windows with plastic
* Know where your water valves are in the event of a burst pipe
* Hire a contractor to check ability of your roof to sustain weight from snow/ice
* Clear rain gutters
* Have heating equipment and chimneys cleaned and inspected annually
* Install carbon monoxide detectors in central location of every floor of your house, as well as near sleeping areas

**Pets**

* Have someone check on your animals if you are unable to be at home for an extended time.
* Have registration/adoption papers and vaccinations handy
* Consider microchipping your pet and enrolling him or her in a recovery database
* Keep at least 3 days of pet-specific food and water per pet
* Some melting salts can be harmful to your pet's feet or if it is ingested

**Heating Safety**

* Make sure your space heater has an automatic shut-off. If it tips over, it shuts off.
* Keep wood stove doors closed except for when adding wood/pellets or stoking the fire.
* Keep snow and ice 3 feet away from fire hydrants.

**Frostbite**

* Symptoms include numbness and white or gray-yellow skin that may feel firm or waxy
* Do not rub the damaged area
* Remove rings, watches or jewelry, etc.
* Cover exposed skin
* Rewarm frostbitten areas with warm, not hot, water
* Seek medical attention as soon as possible
* Once inside, do not walk on frostbitten feet or toes as this can cause more damage

**Hypothermia**

* Symptoms include shivering, exhaustion, confusion, memory loss, slurred speech and drowsiness
* Warm the body from the center
* Remove wet clothes
* Wrap the individual in blankets or put on dry clothing

**Additional Resources**

* [NOAA Weather Prediction Center](https://www.wpc.ncep.noaa.gov/#page=wwx)
* [Winter Weather Checklists](https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/winter/beforestorm/preparehome.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fdisasters%2Fwinter%2Fbeforestorm%2Fsupplylists.html)
* [Snowstorms and Extreme Cold](https://www.ready.gov/winter-weather)
* [Winter Storm Safety](https://www.redcross.org/get-help/how-to-prepare-for-emergencies/types-of-emergencies/winter-storm.html#About)
* [Winter Fire Safety Outreach Materials](https://www.usfa.fema.gov/prevention/outreach/severe_weather.html)
* [Winter Storm Safety Tips and Resources](https://www.weather.gov/safety/winter)
* [Preparing for Winter Weather](https://youtu.be/4KfmnR9drhc)

Thumbnail preview link of Facebook Video Winter Weather Terminology PSA