



NEW YORK CITY **OFFICE OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT**
Office of Public Information

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**NEW YORK CITY OFFICE OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT (OEM) OFFERS
COLD WEATHER AND WINTER STORM SAFETY TIPS**

With severe cold and significant snowfall expected for the weekend, OEM recommends New Yorkers take steps to plan for cold weather and winter storms.

The following safety tips will help New Yorkers stay warm and safe this weekend and all winter long:

Outdoors During a Winter Storm

- Dress warmly, wearing loose-fitting, layered clothing. Several layers of lightweight clothing will keep you warmer than a single heavy coat. Layers can also be removed to prevent perspiration and chill. Outer garments should be tightly woven, wind resistant and water repellent. Mittens are warmer than gloves because fingers generate warmth when they touch each other.
- Keep dry, changing wet clothes frequently to prevent a loss of body heat. Wet clothing loses all its insulating value.

Winter Storm Driving

Whenever possible, avoid driving during a winter storm and instead utilize public transportation.

If you must drive, observe the following tips:

- Avoid traveling alone, but if you do so, let someone know your destination, route and when you expect to arrive.
- Dress warmly. Wear loose-fitting, lightweight clothing in layers.
- Listen to the radio or call the state highway patrol for the latest road conditions.
- Use major streets or highways for travel whenever possible; these roadways will be cleared first.
- Drive slowly. Posted speed limits are for ideal weather conditions. Vehicles take longer to stop on snow and ice than on dry pavement.
- Four-wheel drive vehicles may make it easier to drive on snow-covered roads, but they do not stop quicker than other vehicles.
- If you skid, steer in the direction you want the car to go and straighten the wheel when the car moves in the desired direction.



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- Know your vehicle's braking system. Vehicles with antilock brakes require a different braking technique than vehicles without antilock brakes in icy or snowy conditions.
- Try to keep your vehicle's gas tank as full as possible.

If you become stuck in the road:

- Stay with your car. Do not try to walk to safety.
- Tie a red or brightly colored cloth to the antenna to alert rescuers.
- Start the car and use the heater for about 10 minutes every hour. Keep the exhaust pipe clear of snow to avoid the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning.
- Leave the overhead light on when the car is running so you can be seen.
- Move your arms and legs to keep blood circulating and to stay warm.
- Keep one window slightly open to let in fresh air. Use a window that is opposite the direction the wind is blowing.

Snow Removal Safety Tips

- Stretch before you go out. If you go out to shovel snow, do a few stretching exercises to warm up your body. This may prevent injury.
- Cover your mouth. Protect your lungs from extremely cold air by covering your mouth when outdoors. Try not to speak unless absolutely necessary.
- Avoid overexertion. Cold weather puts an added strain on the heart. Unfamiliar exercise, such as shoveling snow or pushing a car can bring on a heart attack or make other medical conditions worse. Take frequent rest breaks, and drink plenty of fluids to avoid dehydration.
- Keep dry. Change wet clothes frequently to prevent a loss of body heat. Wet clothing loses all of its insulating value and transmits heat rapidly.
- Stay safe. Walk carefully on snowy or icy sidewalks. If using a snow blower, NEVER use your hands to unclog the machine.
- Maintain an awareness of utilities when shoveling snow. Do not cover fire hydrants with snow when clearing sidewalks and driveways. Do not shovel snow into manholes and catch basins.
- Help those who may require special assistance, including infants, the elderly and infirm, and people with disabilities.

After a Storm

- Check in on relatives, friends, and neighbors who may need assistance after a storm.
- Check for physical damage to your property. Remove ice and snow from tree limbs, roofs and other structures. Hire a professional if large amounts of snow have accumulated on flat roofs of your home.
- Make sure water pipes are functioning properly. If a pipe has burst, turn off water valves and call DEP.
- After an ice storm, power lines may freeze, causing them to sag or fall, which can pose a significant risk of electrocution and loss of power. Report downed power lines and broken gas lines immediately.



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- Remove ice and snow from sidewalks and steps. Fresh snow is much easier to remove if it is done quickly than if it is allowed to remain, especially overnight, when it can freeze and harden. Rock salt can be used to melt ice, and kitty litter can be applied to snow to provide temporary traction.

Tips for Staying Warm

Exposure to cold can cause life-threatening health conditions. Avoid serious conditions such as frostbite and hypothermia, by keeping warm.

- Wear a hat, hood or scarf, as most heat is lost through the head.
- Wear layers, as they provide better insulation and warmth.
- Keep clothing dry; if a layer becomes wet, remove it.

How to Help Others

- Infants and the elderly are at increased risk of hypothermia and frostbite. Check on vulnerable friends, relatives and neighbors to ensure they are adequately protected from the cold.
- Community members that identify someone on the street they believe needs assistance should call 311 and ask for the Mobile Outreach Response Team. The Department of Homeless Services will send an outreach team to the location to assess the individual's condition and take appropriate action.
- Recognize symptoms of cold weather illnesses such as frostbite and hypothermia.

Hypothermia: symptoms include slurred speech, sluggishness, confusion, dizziness, shallow breathing, unusual behavior, and slow, irregular heartbeat.

Frostbite: symptoms include gray, white or yellow skin discoloration, numbness, and waxy feeling skin.

- If you suspect a person is suffering from frostbite or hypothermia, bring him or her someplace warm and seek medical help immediately or call 911.
- If medical help is unavailable, re-warm the person, starting at the core of their body. Warming arms and legs first can increase circulation of cold blood to the heart, which can lead to heart failure. Use a blanket, or if necessary, your own body heat to warm the person.
- Do not give a person suffering frostbite or hypothermia alcohol or caffeine, both of which can worsen the condition. Instead, give the patient a cup of warm broth.

If You Need Emergency Heating Assistance

The Human Resources Administration (HRA) administers the federal Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP), which provides low-income people with emergency heating assistance. Eligible residents will receive a payment for fuel delivery, or HRA will arrange for fuel delivery or boiler



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repair. Emergency assistance is given to those who qualify only once per heating season. Call 311 for more information.

Safe Home Heating Tips

Improper use of portable heating equipment can lead to fire or dangerous levels of carbon monoxide. Take precautions to ensure you are heating your home safely.

Fire Safety:

- Use only portable heating equipment that is approved for indoor use.
- Keep combustible materials, including furniture, drapes, and carpeting at least three feet away from the heat source. NEVER drape clothes over a space heater to dry.
- Always keep an eye on heating equipment. Never leave children alone in the room where a space heater is running. Turn it off when you are unable to closely monitor it.
- Be careful not to overload electrical circuits.
- Make sure you have a working smoke detector in every room. Check and change batteries often.

Carbon Monoxide Safety:

- Make sure you have a working carbon monoxide detector. Test all detectors at least once a month. Replace batteries twice a year, in the spring and in the fall when clocks are changed for daylight savings time.
- Make sure all fuel-burning items – such as furnaces, boilers, hot water heaters, and clothes dryers – are operating properly, ventilated and regularly inspected by a professional in order to prevent unintentional carbon monoxide poisoning.
- If you have a working fireplace, keep chimneys clean and clear of debris, and maintain chimney flues.
- Never turn on your oven to heat your kitchen, or operate gas or charcoal barbecue grills, kerosene- or oil-burning heater in an enclosed space.
- Recognize signs of carbon monoxide poisoning:

The most common symptom is HEADACHE. However, symptoms may also include dizziness, chest pain, nausea and vomiting. In severe cases, people can become increasingly irritable, agitated and confused, eventually becoming lethargic and lapsing into unconsciousness.

- If you suspect carbon monoxide poisoning, call 911, and get the victim to fresh air immediately, and open windows.