

EMERGENCY PLANNING

A **MAJOR WINTER STORM** can last for several days and be accompanied by high winds, freezing rain or sleet, heavy snowfall, and cold temperatures. People can become trapped at home, without utilities or other services. Heavy snowfall and blizzards can trap motorists in their cars. Attempting to walk for help in a blizzard can be a deadly decision. Know your terms:

- A **NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE WATCH** is a message indicating that conditions favor the occurrence of a certain type of hazardous weather;
- A **NWS WARNING** indicates a hazardous event is occurring or is imminent in about 30 minutes to an hour. Local NWS forecast offices issue warnings on a county-by-county basis;
- A **WINTER STORM WATCH** means a winter storm is possible in your area;
- A **WINTER STORM WARNING** means a winter storm is occurring, or will soon occur, in your area; and
- A **BLIZZARD WARNING** means sustained winds or frequent gusts to 35 mph or greater and considerable falling or blowing snow (reducing visibility to less than a quarter mile) are expected to prevail.

Winter storms are considered to be deceptive killers because most deaths are indirectly related to the storm. The leading cause of death during winter storms is from automobile or other transportation accidents. Exhaustion and heart attacks caused by overexertion are the two most likely causes of winter storm-related deaths. Elderly people account for the largest percentage of hypothermia victims. Many older Americans literally “freeze to death” in their own homes after being exposed to dangerously cold indoor temperatures, or asphyxiated because of improper use of fuels such as charcoal briquettes, which produce carbon monoxide. House fires occur more frequently in the winter due to lack of proper safety precautions when using alternate heating sources (unattended fires, disposal of ashes too soon, improperly placed space heaters, etc.). Fire during winter storms presents a great danger because water supplies may freeze and it may be difficult for firefighting equipment to get to the fire.

PLAN AHEAD FOR WINTER STORMS by:

- Developing a Family Disaster Plan;
- Developing an Emergency Kit;
- Keep your car’s gas tank full for emergency use;
- Get training. Consider taking a Red Cross first aid course to learn how to treat exposure to the cold, frostbite and hypothermia;
- Make sure your home is properly insulated;
- Keep pipes from freezing by wrapping them in insulation or layers of newspaper and cover with plastic to keep out the moisture. Let faucets drip.

WHAT TO DO DURING A WINTER STORM WATCH:

- Listen to the radio for updated information;
- Be aware of changing weather conditions—severe weather can happen quickly!
- Move animals to sheltered areas, and have a water supply available. Most animal deaths in winter storms are from dehydration;
- Avoid unnecessary travel—your safest place during a storm is indoors;

WHAT TO DO DURING A WINTER STORM OR BLIZZARD WARNING:

- Stay indoors-wearing layers of loose-fitting, lightweight, warm clothing will keep you warmer than one bulky sweater. Remove layers to avoid overheating, perspiration and subsequent chill;
- Listen to the radio/television for updated news;
- Conserve fuel;
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- Eat regularly and drink fluids to prevent dehydration (avoid caffeine & alcohol);

IF YOU MUST GO OUTSIDE:

- Wear layered clothing, mittens or gloves, and a hat;
- Cover your mouth to protect your lungs from extremely cold air;
- Watch for signs of hypothermia & frostbite;
- Keep dry;
- Stretch before you go out, and avoid overexertion;

WINTER DRIVING:

- Have your car winterized before the winter season;
- Keep your cell phone charged and with you when traveling;
- Keep a separate disaster supply kit in your trunk;
- Keep your car’s gas tank full;
- Plan your trips carefully, and let someone know your destination, route and ETA;

IF YOU GET STUCK:

- Stay with your vehicle-do not leave to search for assistance unless help is visible within 100 yards. Disorientation and confusion come quickly in blowing snow;
- Display a trouble sign, preferably red, on your antenna to indicate you need help;
- Run the engine for ten minutes every hour. Carbon monoxide can build up inside a standing vehicle while the engine is running even if the exhaust pipe is clear. Keep a downwind window open for ventilation and keep the exhaust pipe clear of snow;
- Do minor exercises to keep up circulation;
- Use newspapers, maps and car mats for added insulation; and
- Watch for signs of frostbite or hypothermia.

WHAT TO DO AFTER A WINTER STORM:

- Help a neighbor who may require special assistance;
- Avoid driving until conditions have improved;
- Continue to avoid overexertion; and
- Follow forecasts and be prepared when venturing outside. Major winter storms are often followed by even colder conditions.

~ National Disaster Education Coalition

Happy 2011!! ~ Hubbard Public Works

Knowledge and preparation are your best defense and are your responsibility! For more information on EMERGENCY PLANNING, call 503.982.9429, or visit our website at www.cityofhubbard.org.

