

01 / BEFORE THE EVENT

Winter storms

Plan warmth before the heat goes out.

A warmer destination, safe heating decisions, blocked exhausts and practical preparations for snow and ice.

ACT FIRST If your home cannot stay safely warm, seek an available heated place using safe transport. If anyone is in immediate danger, call emergency services. Never bring outdoor cooking or generating equipment inside. [2, 4]

Choose a heated fallback

Identify a friend, relative or officially announced warming location and confirm access, hours and transport. Write down who can help anyone with mobility or medical needs. Do not make the first transport plan after roads become hazardous. [1, 3]

Check the household kit and alarms

Gather warm layers, blankets, ready-to-eat food, water, medicines, flashlights and a radio. Check battery-backed carbon monoxide alarms and have heating equipment serviced by a qualified technician. [3, 4]

Prepare for travel disruption

Postpone unnecessary journeys when conditions are dangerous. If travel is necessary, carry winter supplies and a charged phone; tell someone your route. Keep fuel available before the storm and check local road advice. [2, 3]

U.S. and Canadian sources. Apply current local instructions wherever you live. This guide is not a live alert service or an official agency publication.

02 / DURING AND AFTER

When conditions change

DURING THE EVENT

Conserve warmth safely

Wear loose layers, keep clothing dry, close unused rooms and draw curtains. Keep required appliance ventilation unobstructed. Never use a gas oven, charcoal grill or camping stove to heat an indoor space. [2, 4]

If stranded in a vehicle

Stay with the vehicle rather than walking into blowing snow. Contact help and make the vehicle visible. NWS advises running the engine about 10 minutes per hour for heat, with a window slightly open and the exhaust pipe clear of snow; only do this when it can be done safely. [2]

AFTER THE IMMEDIATE THREAT

Check access and exhausts

Wait until it is safe to go outside. Snow can obstruct furnace exhausts; follow manufacturer instructions and get qualified help for inaccessible vents. Do not climb an icy roof to clear equipment. [2]

Review refrigerated food

A closed refrigerator protects food for up to four hours without power. A closed full freezer holds temperature about 48 hours, or 24 hours when half full. Use the official food-by-food chart; appearance or taste does not prove safety. [5]

03 / DETAILS WORTH KNOWING

Small details. Better decisions.

A blocked exhaust can change the risk

A running car trapped by snow can accumulate carbon monoxide if its exhaust is blocked. Clearing the tailpipe is part of NWS stranded-vehicle guidance, not an optional housekeeping step. [2]

Cold weather can also interrupt payment

Canadian preparedness guidance recommends some cash because bank machines and electronic payments may stop during outages. Set aside a practical amount while services work. [3]

Where backup power fits

A battery plan for phones and lights is different from a plan for electric space heating. Illustrative calculation: a heater drawing 1,500 W uses 1,500 Wh in one hour before conversion losses. A 1,000 Wh battery cannot supply that hour even in an ideal calculation. Confirm your heating system with an installer; do not improvise a connection to household wiring.

Try this before you need it

Imagine the roads are already icy and your home is getting colder. Write down the transport option you arranged in advance and the person who will confirm the warm destination is available.

Local context: Canada

Use Canadian weather warnings and provincial road conditions for the journey itself. Local warming locations, municipal notices and utility updates are more useful than a generic national checklist during an active storm.

04 / YOUR HOUSEHOLD ACTION CARD

Write it down. Keep it handy.

Complete this page before an emergency. Review when your household, equipment or local instructions change.

Heated destination / opening information

Safe transport / backup contact

Heating installer or landlord contact

Location of kit, layers and alarm checks

Person to check on / agreed check-in time

READY CHECK

- ☐ Warm destination and transport arranged
- ☐ Carbon monoxide alarms checked
- ☐ Winter household and vehicle kits ready
- ☐ Heating and exhaust instructions available
- ☐ Fridge thermometer and food guidance available

SOURCES / Numbers refer to the actions in this guide

1. [NOAA / NWS - Prepare for cold weather](#)
2. [NOAA / NWS - Caught in a winter storm](#)
3. [Environment and Climate Change Canada - Be prepared for winter weather](#)
4. [CDC - Carbon monoxide prevention](#)
5. [FoodSafety.gov - Food safety during a power outage](#)

Original summaries and planning prompts by StillPower Guide, operated by Mihai Florea. Sources checked October 24, 2026. No agency endorsement. The linked sources provide fuller guidance.