**Winter Storm**

**MAIN POINT(S) / KEY MESSAGES:**

1. **Understand the dangers of winter storms and prepare.**

* Winter storms include a variety of weather, including snow or subfreezing temperatures, strong winds and even ice or heavy rain storms.
* Have your heating system checked by a professional annually. This will ensure that your system is working safely and efficiently, which, in turn, will save you money.
* Make sure your home is well insulated and that you have weather stripping around your doors and windowsills to keep the warm air inside.
* Trim dead tree branches and limbs close to your home. Ice, snow and wind can combine to snap limbs that can take down power lines or damage your home.
* Clean gutters. Melting snow and ice can build up if gutters are clogged with debris. When thawing begins, the water can back up under your roof and eaves causing damage to walls and ceilings.
* Have sufficient heating fuel, as regular sources may be cut off. Have the option of emergency heating equipment and fuel (a gas fireplace, wood burning stove or fireplace) so you can keep at least one room heated. Be sure the room is well ventilated.
* If you heat by wood, clean your fireplace or stove, have your chimney flue checked for any buildup of creosote and then cleaned to lessen the risk of fire.
* Detailed information on winter storms can be found by contacting the National Weather Service Forecast Office, your local emergency management agency, or by monitoring local TV, radio, and NOAA weather radio.
* Follow NHHSEM on Twitter and Facebook for the latest storm updates and recommendations.
* Learn more about Family Emergency Plans, Emergency Contact Cards, and Emergency Kits at ReadyNH.gov.
* Learn more about winter storm, extreme cold, and power outage preparedness at ReadyNH.gov.

1. **Be Safe Inside During the Winter Storm**

* Monitor Pipes and Water Supply
  + To keep pipes from freezing wrap pipes in insulation, heat tape or layers of old newspapers. Cover the newspapers with plastic to keep out moisture and let faucets drip a little to avoid freezing.
  + If pipes freeze, remove insulation, completely open all faucets and pour hot water over the pipes, starting where they are most exposed to the cold. A hand-held hair dryer, used with caution, also works well.
  + If your water supply could be affected by a power outage (a well-water pump system), be prepared to fill your bathtub and spare containers with water. Water in the bathtub should be used for sanitation purposes only, not as drinking water. Pouring a pail of water from the tub directly into the bowl can flush a toilet.
* Beware of Carbon Monoxide Poisoning
  + The warning signs of CO poisoning are flu-like symptoms such as headache, nausea, vomiting, dizziness, drowsiness, and confusion, but without a fever.
  + Ensure that your Carbon Monoxide (CO) detectors are working correctly and have fresh batteries. Check your outside fuel exhaust vents making sure that they are not obstructed by snow or ice.
  + If you or anyone in the home thinks you are being poisoned by carbon monoxide:
    - Leave the house at once.
    - Call the fire department or 911.
    - Get medical attention. Call the Poison Center (1-800-222-1222) after you leave the house.
* Stay Warm
  + Wear layers of loose-fitting, lightweight, warm clothing. Several layers of lightweight clothing will keep you warmer than a single heavy coat. Wear gloves (or mittens) and a hat to help prevent loss of body heat. Change wet clothing to prevent loss of body heat.
  + Close off unneeded rooms, stuff towels or rags in the cracks under doors and cover windows at night.
  + Conserve fuel, if necessary, by keeping your residence cooler than normal. Temporarily close off heat to some rooms.
  + Use emergency generators and alternate heat sources safely:
    - Only use a generator that has been properly connected to house wiring by a professional and with an interlock device to avoid back feeding to the power lines and injuring a line worker or neighbor.
    - Run generators outside and 10 feet away from windows, doors, vents, and overhangs. Improper placement of generators and improper venting of heat sources are a major cause of carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning. CO is a colorless, tasteless, odorless gas that can kill.
    - Wait for the generator to cool prior to refueling.
    - Only use alternate heat sources that are recommended for in home use.
    - Follow manufacturer’s instructions.
    - Remember to keep outside vents for heaters and stoves clear of snow, as clogged vents may also pose carbon monoxide dangers.
    - Do not use a gas range or oven as an alternate source of heat.
* Check on elderly relatives or neighbors who may need additional assistance to ensure their safety.
* Go to a designated public shelter if your home loses power or heat during periods of extreme cold. Text SHELTER + your ZIP code to 43362 (4FEMA) to find the nearest shelter in your area or contact your local American Red Cross Chapter or emergency management agency. The Red Cross also provides information on shelters through the Red Cross mobile app.

1. **Be Safe Outside During the Winter Storm**

* Wear layers of loose-fitting, lightweight, warm clothing. Several layers of lightweight clothing will keep you warmer than a single heavy coat. Wear gloves (or mittens) and a hat to help prevent loss of body heat. Change wet clothing to prevent loss of body heat.
* Cover your mouth with a scarf to protect your lungs from extremely cold air.
* Walk carefully on snowy, icy, walkways.
* Use caution not to over exert yourself when shoveling snow.
* Best Practices If You Are Driving
  + Drive only if it is absolutely necessary. If you must drive, consider the following:
  + Plan ahead for winter travel. Be sure to let someone know where you are going, along with your primary and alternate routes.
  + Travel in the day and do not travel alone.
  + Stay on main roads; avoid back road shortcuts.
  + Drive slowly and allow extra space between vehicles
  + Do not crowd the plows or emergency workers.
  + Clear all snow off of your car, including your roof, around lights, and license plates.
  + Keep your gas tank at least half full.
* If a blizzard traps you in the car:
  + Pull off the highway. Turn on hazard lights and hang a distress flag from the radio antenna or window.
  + Remain in your vehicle where rescuers are most likely to find you. Do not set out on foot unless you can see a building close by where you know you can take shelter. Be careful; distances are distorted by blowing snow. A building may seem close, but be too far to walk to in deep snow.
  + Run the engine and heater about 10 minutes each hour to keep warm. When the engine is running, open a downwind window slightly for ventilation and periodically clear snow from the exhaust pipe. This will protect you from possible carbon monoxide poisoning.
  + Exercise to maintain body heat, but avoid overexertion. In extreme cold, use road maps, seat covers, and floor mats for insulation. Huddle with passengers and use your coat for a blanket.
  + Take turns sleeping. One person should be awake at all times to look for rescue crews.
  + Drink fluids to avoid dehydration.
  + Be careful not to waste battery power. Balance electrical energy needs - the use of lights, heat, and radio - with supply.
  + Turn on the inside light at night so work crews or rescuers can see you.
  + Leave the car and proceed on foot if necessary once the blizzard passes.
* If stranded in a remote area, stomp large block letters in an open area spelling out HELP or SOS and line with rocks or tree limbs to attract the attention of rescue personnel who may be surveying the area by airplane.

**NOTES**:

**Important Language to Know**

* Winter Storm Watch: a winter storm is possible in your area. Tune in to NOAA Weather Radio, commercial radio, or television for more information.
* Winter Storm Warning: a winter storm is occurring or will soon occur in your area. Take action.
* Blizzard Warning: sustained winds or frequent gusts to 35 miles per hour or greater and considerable amounts of falling or blowing snow, reducing visibility, are expected to prevail for a period of three hours or longer.
* Winter Weather Advisory – Winter weather conditions are expected to cause significant inconveniences and may be hazardous, especially to motorists.
* Frost/Freeze Warning: below freezing temperatures are expected.
* Freezing Rain: rain that freezes when it hits the ground, creating a coating of ice on roads, walkways, trees, and power lines.
* Sleet: rain that turns to ice pellets before reaching the ground. Sleet also causes moisture on roads to freeze and become slippery.
* Flurries: light snow falling for short durations. No accumulation or light dusting is all that is expected.
* Showers: snow falling at varying intensities for brief periods of time. Some accumulation is possible.
* Squalls: brief, intense snow showers accompanied by strong, gusty winds. Accumulation may be significant.
* Blowing Snow: wind-driven snow that reduces visibility and causes significant drifting. Blowing snow may be snow that is falling and/or loose snow on the ground picked up by the wind.
* Blizzard: winds over 35 mph with snow and blowing snow reducing visibility to near zero.

**ANTICIPATED TOUGH QUESTIONS**: