

:30 Second Public Service Announcement

“Be Prepared”

Winter in New York State is a time of unsurpassed beauty. It also is a time when winter storms and sub-zero temperatures pose a threat to disrupt our daily normal lives.

Now is the time to prepare your home and car to safely enjoy the winter season. Have your home heating system checked by a professional. If you heat by wood, clean your fireplace or stove now. Have your chimney checked for any buildup of creosote and then cleaned to lessen the risk of fire.

Make sure your car is tuned and your exhaust system is working properly. Also check your snowblower and other snow removal equipment and have a supply of sand or kitty litter on hand to provide traction on walkways.

“Family Disaster Plan”

Families should be prepared for all hazards that affect their area and themselves. The Rockland County Office of Emergency Management urges each family to develop such a plan.

Follow these basic steps to develop a family disaster plan:

1. Learn your community's warning signals.
2. Meet with your family to create a plan. Pick two places to meet: a spot outside your home for an emergency such as fire, and a place away from your neighborhood in case you cannot return home (a real possibility during the day when adults are at work and children are at school). Choose an out-of-area friend as your family check-in contact for everyone to call if the family gets separated.
3. Implement your plan. Post emergency telephone numbers by the phones. Install safety features in your house such as smoke detectors and fire extinguishers. Inspect your home for potential hazards – and correct them. Have your family learn basic safety and first aid measures. Make sure everyone knows how and when to call 9-1-1 or your local emergency medical services phone number. Have disaster supplies on hand.

“Winter Warnings”

As the winter weather season approaches, do you know what the various weather warnings and advisories mean?

WINTER STORM WATCH indicates that winter weather may affect your area.

WINTER STORM WARNING indicates that severe winter weather conditions are definitely on the way.

BLIZZARD WARNING indicates that snow and strong winds of at least 35 miles per hour combined will produce blinding snow, near-zero visibility, deep drifts and life-threatening wind chill.

WINTER WEATHER ADVISORY indicates winter weather conditions, with snowfall of between 3 to 6 inches, are expected to cause significant inconveniences and may be hazardous, especially to motorists.

Knowing what these terms mean will help you better protect yourself and loved ones.

“Winterize Your Home”

Take the time now to get your home ready for the winter season by following these tips from the Rockland County Office of Emergency Management:

Make sure your home is properly insulated. If necessary, insulate walls and attic. This will help you to conserve energy and reduce your home's power demands for heat.

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Caulk and weather-strip doors and windowsills to keep cold air out.

Install storm windows or cover windows with plastic from the inside. This will provide an extra layer of insulation, keeping more cold air out.

To keep pipes from freezing:

- Wrap pipes in insulation or layers of old newspapers.
- Cover the newspapers with plastic to keep out moisture.
- Let faucets drip a little to avoid freezing.
- Know how to shut off water valves.

“Winterize Your Vehicle”

Preparing your vehicle for the winter season now will help ensure your vehicle is in good working order when you need it most.

Have a mechanic check the following items on your vehicle:

Battery	Wipers and windshield washer fluid
Antifreeze	Ignition system
Thermostat	Lights
Exhaust system	Flashing hazard lights
Heater	Brakes
Defroster	Oil level

Install good winter tires. Make sure the tires have adequate tread. All-weather radials are usually adequate for most winter conditions. You may also want to carry a set of tire chains in your vehicle for heavy snow conditions.

Keep a windshield scraper and small broom for ice and snow removal.

Maintain at least a half tank of gas throughout the winter season.

Finally, plan long trips carefully. Listen to the local media report or call law enforcement agencies for the latest road conditions.

“Drive Safely”

The leading cause of death and injuries during winter storms is transportation accidents.

Before getting behind the wheel this winter season, every driver could learn a lesson from our school bus drivers.

- It's elementary ... but we have to keep our vehicles clear of ice and snow. Good vision is a key to good driving.
- Plan your stops ... keep more distance between cars.
- Be extra alert. Remember, snowdrifts can hide smaller children.
- And always ... match your speed to the road and weather conditions.

“If the Lights Go Out”

If you lose electrical service during the winter, follow these tips:

Call your utility first to determine area repair schedules. Turn off or unplug lights and appliances to prevent a circuit overload when service is restored. Leave one light on to indicate power has been restored.

To help prevent freezing pipes, turn on faucets slightly. Running water will not freeze as quickly.

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Protect yourself from carbon monoxide poisoning.

- DO NOT operate generators indoors; the motor emits deadly carbon monoxide gas.
- DO NOT use charcoal to cook indoors. It, too, can cause a buildup of carbon monoxide gas.
- DO NOT use your gas oven to heat your home -- prolonged use of an open oven in a closed house can create carbon monoxide gas.
- Make sure fuel space heaters are used with proper ventilation.
- Keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible to help reduce food spoilage.

“Carbon Monoxide Poisoning”

Carbon monoxide poisoning is a silent, deadly killer claiming about 1,000 lives each year in the United States.

The colorless, odorless gas can be produced by such common items as automotive exhaust, home heating systems and obstructed chimneys.

The gas can also be produced by poorly vented generators, kerosene heaters, gas grills and other items used for cooking and heating when used improperly during the winter months.

NEVER run generators indoors. Open a window slightly when using a kerosene heater. NEVER use charcoal to cook indoors. NEVER use a gas oven to heat your home.

Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning include sleepiness, headaches and dizziness.

If you suspect carbon monoxide poisoning, ventilate the area and get to a hospital.

“Fire Safety”

Wood-burning stoves, fireplaces and heaters can add a cozy glow ... but make sure you are using them safely.

- Always keep a screen around an open flame.
- Never use gas to start your fireplace.
- Never burn charcoal indoors.
- Do not close the damper when ashes are hot.
- When using alternative heat sources such as a fireplace, woodstove, etc. always make sure you have proper ventilation.
- Have your chimney checked before the season for creosote buildup -- and then clean it.
- Have a fire extinguisher and smoke detectors ... and make sure they work!

“Staying Warm Indoors”

If your heat goes out during a winter storm, you can keep warm by closing off rooms you don't need.

Use only safe sources of alternative heat such as a fireplace, small well-vented wood or coal stove or portable space heaters. Always follow manufacturer's instructions.

Dress in layers of lightweight clothing and wear a cap.

Eat well-balanced meals.

Losing your heat when winter's winds are howling isn't pleasant. But by following these simple tips, you will weather the storm more comfortably.

“Generator Safety”

Electric generators can provide you with piece of mind and convenience when you are faced with a temporary loss of electric service.

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The Rockland County Office of Emergency Management urges you to following these safety guidelines when operating a generator:

- Before installing a generator, be sure to properly disconnect from your utility electrical service. If possible, have your generator installed by a qualified electrician.
- Run generators outside, downwind of structures. NEVER run a generator indoors. Deadly carbon monoxide gas from the generator's exhaust can spread throughout enclosed spaces. Install a carbon monoxide detector.
- Fuel spilled on a hot generator can cause an explosion. If your generator has a detachable fuel tank – remove it before refilling. If this is not possible, shut off the generator and let it cool before refilling.
- Do not exceed the rated capacity of your generator. Most of the small, home-use portable generators produce from 350 to 12,000 watts of power. Overloading your generator can damage it, appliances connected to it, and may cause a fire. Follow the manufacturer's instructions.
- Keep children away from generators at all times.

“Kerosene Heaters”

If you use kerosene heaters to supplement your regular heating fuel, or as an emergency source of heat, follow these safety tips from the Rockland County Office of Emergency Management.

- Follow the manufacturer's instructions.
- Use only the correct fuel for your unit.
- Refuel outdoors only, and only when the unit is cool.
- Keep the heater at least three feet away from furniture and other flammable objects.
- When using the heater, use fire safeguards and ventilate properly.

Remember, the fire hazard is greatly increased in the winter because alternate heating sources often are used without following proper safety precautions.

“Dress for the Season”

Winter has arrived and the Rockland County Office of Emergency Management reminds you to dress for the season.

- Wear loose, lightweight, warm clothing in several layers. Trapped air between the layers acts as an insulator. Layers can be removed to avoid perspiration and subsequent chill.
- Outer garments should be tightly woven, water repellent and hooded.
- Always wear a hat or cap on your head since half of your body heat could be lost through an uncovered head.
- Cover your mouth with a scarf to protect your lungs from extreme cold.
- Mittens, snug at the wrist, are better than gloves because fingers maintain more warmth when they touch each other.

“Physical Exertion”

Winter storm conditions and cold waves are the deadliest types of weather.

Cold temperatures put an extra strain on your heart. Heavy exertion -- such as shoveling snow, clearing debris or pushing a car -- increase the risk of a heart attack.

To avoid problems, remember these tips:

- Stay warm, dress warm and SLOW DOWN when working outdoors.
- Take frequent rests to avoid over exertion.
- If you feel chest pain -- STOP and seek help immediately.

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“Hypothermia”**

Prolonged exposure to cold temperatures can cause hypothermia, especially in children and the elderly.

Watch for these symptoms: Inability to concentrate, poor coordination, slurred speech, drowsiness, exhaustion, and uncontrollable shivering followed by a sudden lack of shivering.

If the person’s body temperature drops below 95 degrees Fahrenheit, get emergency medical assistance immediately!

Remove wet clothing, wrap the victim in warm blankets and give warm, non-alcoholic, non-caffeinated liquids until help arrives.

“Frostbite”

People working or playing outdoors during the winter can develop frostbite and not even know it.

There is no pain associated with the early stages of frostbite, so learn to watch for these danger signs:

First, the skin may feel numb and become flushed. Then it turns white or grayish-yellow. Frostbitten skin feels cold to the touch.

If frostbite is suspected, move the victim to a warm area. Cover the affected area with something warm and dry. Never rub it!

And then get to a doctor or hospital as quickly as possible.

“Snowblower Safety”

Do you have a snowblower? Did you know that most snowblower injuries happen because the operator did not read the operating instructions?

So read your owner’s manual and follow these tips:

- Never leave your snowblower running and unattended.
- Make sure the discharge chute is not aimed at passing motorists or pedestrians.
- Never put your hands into the discharge chute or augers to clear stuck snow and ice.
- Never add fuel when the engine is running and hot.
- And make sure you know how to turn the machine off quickly.

“Clearing Your Roof”

As the snow and ice continues to building up across Rockland County, homeowners should think about safety before trying to clear the snow from their roof.

Here are some safety tips from the Rockland County Office of Emergency Management:

- When possible, use long-handled snow rakes or poles.
- If you must use a ladder, make certain that the base is securely anchored. Ask a friend, neighbor or adult family member to hold the ladder while you climb.
- Know where the snow is going to fall before clearing the area.
- Make certain not to contact electrical wires.
- If possible, do not attempt to clear the roof alone.
- If you’re afraid of heights or think the job is too big for you, HIRE HELP.
- Clearing roofs is a dangerous task. But if you think safety, and work safely, you’ll get the job done.

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“Safety on the Road”**

When winter storms strike, don't drive.

If you must travel, make sure your car is stocked with “survival gear” like blankets, a shovel, flashlight and extra batteries, extra warm clothing, set of tire chains, battery booster cables, quick energy foods and brightly-colored cloth to use as a distress flag.

Keep your gas tank full to prevent gasoline freeze-up.

If you have a cell phone or two-way radio available for your use, keep the battery charged and keep it with you whenever traveling. If you should become stranded, you will be able to call for help, advising rescuers of your location.

And make sure someone knows your travel plans.

“Trapped in a Car”

What would you do if a blizzard trapped you on the road?

The Rockland County Emergency Management Office offers this advice:

- Stay in your car. Wait for help to find you.
- Run your engine for short periods of time to stay warm ... but keep your down-wind window open ... and make sure your exhaust pipe is clear of snow.
- Turn on the dome light at night when you are running the engine to signal rescuers.
- Hang a brightly-colored piece of cloth or piece of clothing from your car.
- Exercise from time to time by vigorously moving arms, legs, fingers and toes to keep blood circulating and to keep warm.

“Safety First for Kids”

Hey, kids! Winter can be a fun-filled time when enjoying outdoor activities such as skiing, skating and sledding. But before going out, listen to these safety tips from the Rockland County Office of Emergency Management:

The best way to stay safe in a snowstorm is to stay inside. Long period of exposure to severe cold increases the risk of frostbite or hypothermia.

If you go out to play after the storm, dress in many layers of clothing and wear a hat and mittens. Many layers of thin clothing are warmer than a single layer of thick clothing. One of the best ways to stay warm is to wear a hat; most body heat is lost through the top of the head.

Come inside often for warm-up breaks.

If you start to shiver a lot or get very tired, or if your nose, fingers, toes or earlobes start to feel numb or turn very pale, come inside right away and tell an adult. These are signs of hypothermia and frostbite. If you experience these symptoms, you will need immediate attention to prevent further risk.

Remember these tips when you go out to play.

“Winter Sports Safety”

Winter is a fun time for children, but it also may be dangerous. Parents should be aware of some simple safety tips for their children when they go sledding:

- Children should never use streets or roads for sledding unless they are blocked off from traffic.
- Children should sled only during daytime hours.
- Children should stay out of the paths of other sledders. And if the slopes become busy, they should move off them quickly.

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- And parents, if you are sledding with your children, follow these rules yourselves.