



Barry-Eaton District Health Department

Be Active • Be Safe • Be Healthy

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For Immediate Release

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Winter Hazards Awareness Week: Michiganders Should Take Steps to Prepare

Gov. Rick Snyder has proclaimed November 5–11 as Winter Hazards Awareness Week. Winter hazards, which include snowstorms, ice storms, and extreme cold, are common in Michigan. All residents should take steps to be as prepared as possible. Being prepared, both at home and on the road, can help ensure that residents stay safe and minimize disruptions due to bad weather.

Home Preparedness

Preparing homes for winter can help residents keep safe and warm and be prepared for power outages. Recommendations for home winter preparedness include the following:

- Make sure that your home is well insulated: consider putting weather stripping around doors and windows and installing storm windows or putting plastic over the inside of normal windows.
- Make sure that your roof can withstand accumulation of heavy snow. Hire a contractor to assess this if you aren't sure how.
- Have a working carbon monoxide detector and fire extinguishers (and make sure everyone knows how to use them). Some methods of heating homes can increase the risk for carbon monoxide poisoning and fires.
- If you have a wood-burning fireplace, have your chimney cleaned and inspected before you start using it. Store extra wood in case your primary heating source stops working in a power outage.
- Learn how to shut off water valves in case a pipe bursts.
- Keep a home emergency kit with water, food, a battery/hand-crank radio, and more. See what this kit should include at <https://www.ready.gov/build-a-kit>.

Vehicle Preparedness

Hitting bad weather while driving and getting stranded in cars are serious threats made even more dangerous when the temperatures drop. The below recommendations can help residents prepare for the worst.

- Winterize your vehicle. Make sure that your antifreeze fluid levels are high, your windshield wipers and headlights/hazard lights are working well, and your tires are in good condition (consider snow tires).
- Keep your gas tank at least half full.
- Keep a car emergency kit. In addition to year-round staples like a first aid kit, battery/hand-crank radio, flashlight, jumper cables, flares, car phone charger, and water and granola bars or other nonperishable food, add cat litter or sand, an ice scraper, and winter clothing (gloves, hat, wool socks, boots, etc.).

General Safety

In addition to being prepared for emergencies, some common-sense winter safety tips include:

- Keeping an eye on the weather. Check the weather forecast before you leave the house, and make sure that you can get weather alerts on your phone.
- Having a plan for power outages if you are dependent on electricity for medical equipment.

- Letting someone know when and where you will be traveling. Take it slow on ice and snow, and try to stick to main roads.
- Checking on relatives and neighbors and bringing pets inside during inclement weather.
- Avoiding overexertion when shoveling snow.
- Watching for signs of frostbite and hypothermia when outside.

For more information on winter hazard preparedness, see <https://www.ready.gov/winter-weather> and <https://goo.gl/po1VH5>.

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