

# WINTER STORMS AND YOUR HOME

Natural Disasters



Winter storms can bring freezing temperatures, large quantities of snow and ice, high winds and blizzard conditions. Damage to your home or power outages lasting several days may be possible. Preparing before the storm can help you protect your family and your home.

## Before a Winter Storm

- **Weatherproof/winterize your home.**
  - Caulk and weatherstrip doors and windows.
  - Add insulation, insulated doors, storm windows, or thermal-pane windows.
  - Insulate any water lines that run along exterior walls so they will be less likely to freeze.
  - Know how to shut off water valves (in case a pipe bursts).
- **Determine a back-up heating source in case the power goes out.**
  - Gas or log fireplace with plenty of dry firewood
  - Portable space heaters or kerosene heaters
    - Check with your local fire department to make sure that kerosene heaters are legal in your area.
  - Use heating sources only in a well ventilated room to avoid build up of lethal carbon monoxide gas.
  - Keep a fire extinguisher close by.
  - Have your chimney or flue inspected each year.
- **Install a smoke detector and a battery-operated carbon monoxide detector near the area to be heated.**
  - Test them monthly.
  - Replace batteries twice yearly (Spring Ahead/Fall Back).

## During a Winter Storm

- **Keep as much heat as possible inside your home.**
  - Check the temperature in your home often during severely cold weather.
  - Avoid unnecessary opening of doors or windows.
  - Close off unneeded rooms.
  - Stuff towels or rags in cracks under doors.
  - Close draperies or cover windows with blankets at night.
- **Use battery-powered flashlights or lanterns rather than candles, if possible.**
  - Never leave lit candles unattended.
- **Leave all water taps slightly open so they drip continuously.**
- **If back-up heating sources are needed**
  - Never place a space heater on top of furniture or near water.
  - Use electric space heaters with automatic shut-off switches and non-glowing elements.
  - Keep heat sources at least 1 metre away from furniture, drapes, or bedding.
  - Never cover a space heater.
  - Never leave children unattended near a space heater.

- **If backup power supplies are needed,**
  - Never use an electric generator indoors, inside the garage, or near the air intake of your home because of the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning.
  - Do not store gasoline indoors where the fumes could ignite.
  - Use individual heavy-duty, outdoor-rated cords to plug in other appliances.
- **Never use a charcoal or gas grill indoors—the fumes are deadly.**
  - Dangerous carbon monoxide can be generated.

## After a Winter Storm

- **Assess the situation.**
  - Make sure heating systems are working.
  - Make sure water pipes are working.
  - Look for any damage that may have occurred to your home.
- **If your pipes do freeze,**
  - Do not thaw them with a torch.
  - Instead, thaw them slowly by directing the warm air from an electric hair dryer onto the pipes.
- **Carbon monoxide poisoning**
  - Buildup of this odorless, lethal gas can occur from the use of alternate fuel sources, or gas powered equipment or vehicles.
  - Ensure good ventilation is available before using any of these items.
- **If there are no other problems, wait for streets and roads to be plowed before you drive anywhere.**

