

Are you and your home ready for winter?

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(HealthDay)—Winter storms can pack a wallop. But, people who prepare before temperatures plummet are more likely to stay safe and healthy during winter months, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease

Control and Prevention.

Before winter sets in, the CDC recommends taking these steps at your home:

- Install weatherstripping, insulation and storm windows.
- Insulate water pipes along exterior walls.
- Clear out gutters and fix roof leaks.
- Have your heating system serviced to make sure it's clean and working properly.
- Inspect and clean fireplaces and chimneys.
- Install smoke detectors and check batteries each month.
- Have a safe alternative heating source and alternate fuels available. (Generators should be at least 20 feet from the house.)
- Stock up on water and nonperishable foods that don't need to be cooked.
- Keep cellphones fully charged.
- Don't store grills, camp stoves and generators in the house, basement or garage.

Put together an [emergency kit](#). It should contain:

- Flashlights or battery-operated lamps.
- A National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Weather radio.
- Extra batteries.
- A first-aid kit and extra medicine.
- Baby items.
- Cat litter or sand to provide traction on icy walkways.

It's also important to install a carbon monoxide (CO) detector that will sound in the presence of this deadly, odorless, colorless gas, the CDC advises. Leave the house right away and call 911 if it sounds. Be sure to

check the detector's batteries when the clocks change in the fall and spring. Signs of CO poisoning include headache, dizziness, weakness, nausea and vomiting, chest pain and confusion.

Be sure to check on relatives or neighbors who are more vulnerable to the cold, such as older people, those with chronic health issues and very young children, the CDC adds. Pets should be brought inside or should be provided with dry, warm shelter. Be sure their water doesn't freeze.

It's also important to prepare your car for cold and slippery conditions. The CDC recommends taking these steps now:

- Service the radiator and check the antifreeze level.
- Check tire tread and, if necessary, replace tires with all-weather or snow tires.
- Keep the gas tank full to prevent the fuel tank and lines from getting icy.
- Use a winterized windshield washer.

Assemble a winter emergency kit and put it in your car. It should include:

- Blankets.
- Food and water.
- Booster cables.
- Tire pump.
- Bag of sand or cat litter to help with traction.
- Maps and a compass.
- Flashlight.
- Battery-powered radio.
- Extra batteries.
- First-aid kit.
- Plastic bags (to store waste).

People who travel or participate in outdoor recreational activities in the winter should also take precautions. The CDC provides these tips:

- Dress for the weather, putting on layers of light, warm clothing as well as mittens, hats, scarves and waterproof boots.
- Pour cat litter or sand on icy patches.
- Check the weather report and consider wind chill.
- Work slowly when working outside.
- Always engage in [winter](#) outdoor activities with a friend and carry a cellphone.

If you plan to travel, tell a friend or relative where you are headed, your route and when you expect to reach your destination. If you become stranded:

- Stay with the car unless a safer place is within 100 yards.
- Stay visible. Put a bright cloth on the car antenna, turn on the inside overhead light while the engine is running and raise the hood once snow stops.
- Run the engine and heater for no more than 10 minutes every hour.
- Keep a downwind window open.
- Make sure the tailpipe is not blocked.

More information: The Red Cross provides more information on how to [prepare for winter storms](#).

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