

WINTER WEATHER PREPAREDNESS

Winter weather brings concerns about heat and maximizing its retention, frozen pipes, and access to your place of business. The following checklist will help you identify the areas of your business that are most susceptible to winter hazards and to suggest ways to minimize damage. It is a good idea to develop a plan of action for your business and your staff to be ready for this type of interruption.

Below you will find critical information and preparedness tools to assist in protecting your business and the most critical element of your business—your employees.

Before the Storm

- Check your insurance coverage for protection against winter hazards.
- Develop a procedure for restoring electrical services on an item-by-item basis.
- Develop a procedure for relocating salvageable and undamaged stock and supplies.
- Add the following supplies to your disaster supplies kit: rock salt (to melt ice on driveways), sand (to improve traction), and snow shovels (or other snow removal equipment).
- Determine your greatest risk potential: loss of heat, frozen pipes, and/or loss of access due to snow/ice.
- Identify who is responsible for keeping heating equipment in good working order: business owner or landlord.
- Identify who is responsible for snow/ice removal: business owner or landlord.
- Determine what equipment needs to be protected from freeze -up, i.e. computers, telecommunications, manufacturing equipment, etc.
- Are portable heaters or other emergency equipment needed?
- If snow and/or ice prohibit access to your business, are there alternative ways to enter your premises?
- Seal all openings with caulking and insulation where cold air can enter.
- Repair walls and roofs to prevent drafts; inspect roof drains for debris.
- Make sure storm windows are effective, if appropriate.
- Make sure heating and heat-producing process equipment is in good condition and operating efficiently.
- Arrange for snow removal from driveways, doorways, and roofs.
- Drain all idle pumps and compressors, making sure jackets are vented.
- Provide proper lubrication on equipment for cold weather operation (i.e., emergency generators, snow blowers).
- Test cold weather equipment.
- Clean and inspect boilers and firing mechanism/controls.
- Maintain automatic sprinkler protection in idle buildings; promptly handle sprinkler system impairments; notify local fire department.
- Monitor building temperature especially in hard-to-heat areas containing vulnerable equipment.
- Keep temperatures above 40°F.
- Mark hydrants near your business for ease in locating and clearing after a heavy storm.

During the Storm

- Heaters, snow blowers, generators, and cold-weather equipment should be located where it is most likely to be used.
- Keep driveways, walkways, and doorways clear of snow and ice.
- Open water faucets slightly to let them drip in order to keep water flowing through the pipes that are vulnerable to freezing. Ice may still form, but the open faucet helps prevent the pipe from bursting by allowing relief for any built up pressure.
- Names and phone numbers of your heating contractor, plumber, fire department, insurance agent, and building owner should be easily accessible.
- Have someone assigned to check indoor temperatures should your place of business be vacant for long periods of time.

Your Employees

- Ensure you have an emergency communication plan in place prior to the storm, evacuation, or threat.
- Have all employees, vendors, and client contact information on hand.
- During evacuation consider your phones lines- redirection to cell phones, answering service or Google Voice could be critical.
- Following the storm, notify all critical people of next steps, based on damage.
- Winter storms may range from a moderate snow in a short amount of time to a blizzard lasting for days.
- Some storms are regional and may affect several states, while others are more localized, depending upon geography and terrain. Common characteristics of winter storms are dangerously low temperatures, strong winds, ice, sleet, and freezing rain.

Know The Terms

- Winter storm watch---be alert, a storm is likely
- Winter storm warning---take action, the storm is in or entering the area
- Blizzard warning---snow and strong winds combined will produce blinding snow, near zero visibility, deep drifts, and life-threatening wind chill--seek refuge immediately!
- 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 and may cause damage to plants, crops, or fruit trees

Before Winter Storms and Extreme Cold

- To prepare for a winter storm you should do the following:
 - Before winter approaches, add the following supplies to your emergency kit:
 - Rock salt or more environmentally safe products to melt ice on walkways.
 - Sand to improve traction.
 - Snow shovels and other snow removal equipment.
 - Sufficient heating fuel. You may become isolated in your home and regular fuel sources may be cut off. Store a good supply of dry, seasoned wood for your fireplace or wood-burning stove.
 - Adequate clothing and blankets to keep you warm.
- Make a Family Communications Plan. Your family may not be together when disaster strikes, so it is important to know how you will contact one another, how you will get back together and what you will do in case of an emergency.
- A NOAA Weather Radio broadcasts alerts and warnings directly from the NWS for all hazards.
- Sign up in advance to receive notifications from your local emergency services.
- Minimize travel. If travel is necessary, keep a disaster supplies kit in your vehicle.
- Bring pets/companion animals inside during winter weather.

During Winter Storms and Extreme Cold

- Stay indoors during the storm.
- Walk carefully on snowy, icy, walkways.
- Avoid overexertion when shoveling snow. Use caution, take breaks, push the snow instead of lifting it when possible, and lift lighter loads.
- Keep dry. Change wet clothing frequently to prevent a loss of body heat. Wet clothing loses all of its insulating value and transmits heat rapidly.
- Keep alert for signs of frostbite.
- Be aware of the signs of hypothermia
 - Dangerously low body temperature
 - Uncontrollable shivering
 - memory loss
 - disorientation
 - incoherence
 - slurred speech
 - drowsiness
 - apparent exhaustion.
- Drive only if it is absolutely necessary. If you must drive: travel in the day; don't travel alone; keep others informed of your schedule; stay on main roads and avoid back road shortcuts.
- Let someone know your destination, your route, and when you expect to arrive. If your car gets stuck along the way, help can be sent along your predetermined route.
- If the pipes freeze, remove any insulation or layers of newspapers and wrap pipes in rags. Completely open all faucets and pour hot water over the pipes, starting where they were most exposed to the cold (or where the cold was most likely to penetrate).

- Maintain ventilation when using kerosene heaters to avoid build-up of toxic fumes. Refuel kerosene heaters outside and keep them at least three feet from flammable objects.
- Conserve fuel, if necessary, by keeping your residence cooler than normal. Temporarily close off heat to some rooms.
- If you will be going away during cold weather, leave the heat on in your home, set to a temperature no lower than 55°F.

After Winter Storms and Extreme Cold

- If you lose power or heat for more than a few hours or if you do not have adequate supplies to stay warm in your home overnight, you may want to go to a designated public shelter if you can get there safely. Text SHELTER + your ZIP code to 43362 (4FEMA) to find the nearest shelter in your area (e.g., SHELTER20472)
- Bring any personal items that you would need to spend the night (such as toiletries, medicines). Take precautions when traveling to the shelter. Dress warmly in layers, wear boots, mittens, and a hat.
- Continue to protect yourself from frostbite and hypothermia by wearing warm, loose-fitting, lightweight clothing in several layers. Stay indoors, if possible.

Learn From Every Storm

Restock your emergency supplies to be ready in case another storm hits.

- Assess how well your supplies and family plan worked. What could you have done better?
- Take a few minutes to improve your family plan and supplies before the next winter storm hits.
- Talk to your neighbors and colleagues about their experiences and share tips with each other