

FREE GUIDE • WINTER

Winter Storm and Ice-Outage Plan

Heat, light, the car, and the neighbors: your household's plan before the first ice storm.

Hey, I'm Randall. I'm a former Marine Combat Engineer, and my wife, Robbie, is a registered nurse. A winter storm can last a few hours or several days, and Ready.gov says it can cut off heat, power and communication services. Fill this in before the forecast turns. Pencil is fine.

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Know the Alert Words

- **Winter Storm Watch:** a blizzard, heavy snow, heavy freezing rain or heavy sleet is possible. Usually issued 12 to 48 hours before the storm. [S1]
- **Winter Storm Warning:** hazardous winter weather is imminent or occurring. Usually issued 12 to 24 hours before. Ready.gov says to find shelter right away. [S1]
- **Winter Weather Advisory:** snow, freezing rain, freezing drizzle or sleet that will cause significant inconvenience and could become life-threatening if caution is not used. [S1]

Sign up for your community's warning system. The Emergency Alert System and NOAA Weather Radio also carry alerts. [S1]

- ☐ Signed up for local alerts
- ☐ Weather radio has fresh batteries
- ☐ I know how to keep our pipes from freezing

Worksheet A: Our Heat and Shelter Plan

If your heat goes out, the National Weather Service says to close off unneeded rooms, stuff towels or rags in cracks under doors, close blinds or curtains, and wear layers of loose, lightweight, warm clothing. [S2]

Our One Warm Room (small, With A Door That Closes):

Rooms We Will Close Off:

Where Everyone Sleeps (beds, Bedding, Who Shares):

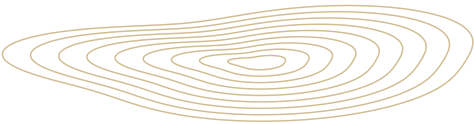
Our Heat Source If Power Fails (and Who Has Used It Before):

Electric Company Outage Number:

Gas Company Number:

Local Warming Center:





STEP 2

Warmth, Light and Power Inventory

Ready.gov says to gather supplies in case you must stay home for several days without power, keep each person's specific needs in mind (including medication and pets), and have extra batteries for radios and flashlights. [S1]

What We Need To Stay Warm, Lit And Informed:	How Many We Have:	How Many We Need:	Where It Is Stored:

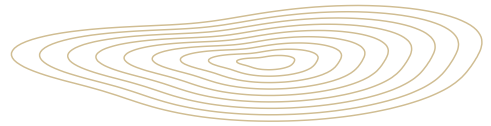
Starter list to copy from: blankets and sleeping bags, warm clothes in layers, flashlights and headlamps, extra batteries, weather radio, power banks, nonperishable food and water, any medication and pet supplies. [S1][S2]

Carbon monoxide and generators: read this before anything else

The CDC calls CO an odorless, colorless gas that kills without warning.
Only use generators and grills outdoors and away from windows. Never heat your home with a gas stovetop or oven. [S1]
Put a generator and its fuel outdoors, at least 20 feet from windows, doors and attached garages. Keep it dry. Use heavy-duty extension cords. Let it cool before you refuel. Follow the maker's instructions. [S1]
Install CO detectors with battery backup on every level. If the CO alarm sounds, get everyone outside right away. Then call 911. [S1][S6]
Never run a generator in the garage, even with the door open. Never plug one into a wall outlet (backfeeding). Only an electrician should install a transfer switch. [S6]

- ☐ CO alarm with battery backup on every level
- ☐ Smoke alarms tested
- ☐ Generator fuel stored outside living areas, away from fuel-burning appliances [S6]



**STEP 3**

The Car: Kit and Trip Rules

Ready.gov says to stay off the roads if at all possible. If you must drive, the National Weather Service says to tell someone your route and when you expect to arrive. [S1][S2]

Worksheet C: Car Kit

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ Jumper (battery booster) cables | ☐ Ice scraper and brush |
| ☐ Phone and car charger | ☐ Blankets or sleeping bags |
| ☐ Flashlight with extra batteries | ☐ Sand or cat litter for traction |
| ☐ Shovel | ☐ High-calorie, non-perishable food |
| ☐ Water | ☐ Extra warm, dry clothing |
| ☐ Road map and compass | ☐ First-aid kit |
| ☐ Flares or reflective triangle | ☐ Tow rope and basic tools |

Kit items come from Ready.gov and the NWS. [S1][S4][S5]

Keep the gas tank full. Ready.gov says a full tank also keeps the fuel line from freezing. Have a mechanic check antifreeze, battery, brakes, exhaust, heater and defroster, lights, wipers and washer fluid before winter. [S4]

Before You Drive

Who Knows Where I Am Going And My Route:

Primary And Backup Route:

State Road-conditions Line (many States: Dial 511):

Leave Time And Expected Arrival:

NWS: slow down, even wet-looking roads can be slick. Clear all ice and snow off the vehicle first. Start the trip with a charged phone, a car charger and your kit. Disable cruise control on slippery roads. [S2][S4]

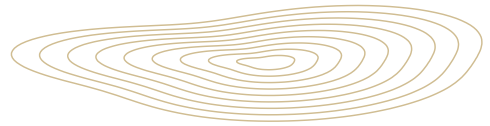
If your car gets stuck (National Weather Service)

Stay in the vehicle. If you leave it, you can become disoriented quickly in wind-driven snow and cold.

Run the motor about 10 minutes each hour for heat. While it runs, open a window a little for fresh air, and keep snow cleared from the exhaust pipe, to avoid carbon monoxide poisoning.

Be visible: dome light on at night while the engine runs, a bright cloth on the antenna or door, hood up once the snow stops.





STEP 4

Check on Neighbors, Pets and the Cold Itself

Ready.gov says winter storms put older adults, children, sick people and pets at greater risk. Write down who on your street may need a knock on the door. [S1]

Worksheet D: Our Check-On List

Neighbor Or Relative:	Address Or Phone:	What They May Need (heat, Food, Ride, Medicine Pickup):	Checked On (date):

Pets: Food, Water And Warm Shelter Plan:

Livestock Or Outdoor Animals: Shelter, Feed, Water:

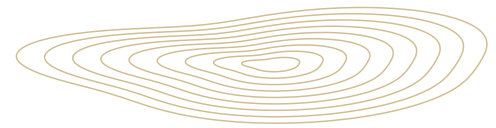
The NWS says to move animals to sheltered areas or bring pets inside, haul extra feed to nearby feeding areas, and have water available. [S5]

Cold, Shoveling and Your Body

Ready.gov lists frostbite and hypothermia signs and what to do. Read that page with your family before the storm, not during it. It also warns against overexertion when shoveling snow. If you are worried about a person's condition, call your doctor or 911.

Shoveling is hard work in the cold. The National Weather Service says to avoid overexertion like shoveling heavy snow, pushing a car or walking in deep snow if you are not in good health, because the strain may cause a heart attack. Ready.gov also has a page on the signs of frostbite and hypothermia. Read it with your family before the storm, not during it. If you are worried about someone, call your doctor or 911.





NEXT STEPS

Gear for This Plan: Our Picks

- **News and weather:** Midland ER310 NOAA weather radio (rechargeable battery and hand crank; solar only stretches a full charge).
- **Light for every person:** Black Diamond Astro 300 headlamp, one per bedroom and one in the glovebox.
- **Phone power:** Anker Nano Power Bank 10,000 mAh 30W, plus a car charger.
- **Car kit:** SOL Emergency Bivvy XL with rescue whistle, with real blankets beside it.
- **Backup power station:** Jackery Explorer 1000 v2 or EcoFlow DELTA 3 Classic (1024Wh), sized with the sheet in the Power Outage Family Plan. Never a substitute for the CO rules above.

Read more on our site • The picks, with the tradeoffs:

[Winter Storm and Ice-Outage Plan: Gear for This Plan](#)

Read more on our site • The outage side, with the sizing sheet:

[Power Outage Family Plan](#)

Read more on our site • Your next free guides:

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Sources

[S1] Ready.gov (FEMA): Winter Weather. Read 10/11/2026.

[S2] NOAA National Weather Service: What To Do If You're Caught in a Winter Storm. Read 10/11/2026.

[S4] Ready.gov (FEMA): Car. Updated 03/12/2026. Read 10/11/2026.

[S5] NOAA National Weather Service: Prepare! Don't Let a Winter Storm Take You by Surprise. Read 10/10/2026.

[S6] American Red Cross: Generator Safety. Read 10/10/2026.

