



Winter Weather Preparedness Checklist

Winter storms can often bring extreme cold temperatures, and knock out heat, power and communication services. Simply staying warm during periods of extreme cold can be a challenge if you are unprepared and there is no infrastructure to assist your area. In addition to service disruptions, winter weather can thwart service restoration because roads may be blocked by deep snow, and icy conditions may add to the difficulties of travel.

This checklist was created to help properly prepare your organization before, during and after a winter storm. Planning and preparing make a difference in keeping your business resilient in the wake of severe winter weather.

BEFORE THE STORM

- Check your insurance coverage for protection against winter hazards.
- Establish a process for restoring electrical services on an item-by-item basis.
- Relocate 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.
- Identify who is responsible for snow/ice removal.
- Determine what equipment needs to be protected from freezing (i.e., computers, telecommunications, manufacturing equipment, etc.)
- Determine whether portable heaters and other emergency equipment are needed.
- Locate alternative ways to enter your premises in case access to your building is blocked.

- 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 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 for cold weather operation (i.e., emergency generators, snowblowers).
- 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 of any anomalies.
- Monitor building temperature, especially in hard-to-heat areas containing vulnerable equipment. Keep temperatures above 40°F.
- Mark hydrants near your business for unobstructed clearing after a heavy storm.

DURING THE STORM

- 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 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.
- Assign someone to check indoor temperatures should your place of business be vacant for long periods of time.

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YOUR PEOPLE

- Ensure you have an emergency communication plan in place prior to the storm, evacuation or threat.
- Have contact information for your employees, vendors and clients on hand.
- Use your alert notification system to keep everyone updated on status and next steps.
- Set up phone redirection if the team is away for an extended period of time.
- Following a storm, notify all critical people of next steps, based on damage.

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 windchill. 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.

Winter storms may range from 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.

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