

STAYING SAFE IN A WINTER STORM

"Oh the weather outside is frightful," begins a familiar holiday tune. Before that frightful weather hits, your Fairfield Department of Health encourages you to prepare in advance for a winter health emergency. When there is a winter storm and you need to stay indoors, you may still face indoor hazards. If your heat goes out, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, exposure to cold temperatures, either inside or outside, can cause serious life-threatening health problems including frostbite, hypothermia and even death.

To keep you and your family safe, you should know what to do if a cold-related health emergency occurs. If your home loses power over several hours, you may face life-threatening cold. If you use space heaters or fireplaces to try to stay warm, the risk of household fires increases as well as the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning. Remember never to use a generator in your home, inside the garage, or near the air intake of your home because of the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning.

Be sure you have a fire extinguisher, as well as a carbon monoxide and smoke detector in your home. When your home gets very cold, remember to leave your water taps slightly open so they drip continuously. If your pipes do freeze, or if they have broken, don't risk getting sick. Use bottled water for drinking.

Your Fairfield Department of Health (www.myfdh.org) and The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (www.cdc.gov) offer website information and winter weather tips and checklists to help make preparing for winter weather safer both at home and in your car. These checklists for your home stress making sure you have plenty of warm indoor and outdoor clothing, blankets, flashlights, batteries, a battery operated radio, first aid kit and enough non-perishable food and water to last for at least a week when you might be safest at home and not on the roads. Remember to provide for your pets as well.

Before driving in cold and snow, your car needs special winter attention as well. Be sure your car is in good working order, and try to keep your fuel tank on high. Also, check your supplies of antifreeze, and the wintertime mixture of windshield wiper fluid, as well as your tire pressure and wear. You want to be sure that your heater, defroster, battery, emergency flashers and brakes work before you really need them in an emergency.

Prepare your car with emergency supplies that you can keep in your car throughout the winter months. The CDC recommends the following:

- Cell phone; portable charger and extra batteries
- Shovel
- Windshield scraper
- Battery-powered radio (and extra batteries)
- Flashlight (and extra batteries)
- Water
- Snack food
- Extra hats, coats, mittens
- Blankets
- Chains or rope
- Tire chains
- Canned compressed air with sealant (emergency tire repair)
- Road salt and sand
- Booster cables
- Emergency flares
- Bright colored flag; help signs
- First aid kit
- Tool kit
- Road maps
- Compass
- Waterproof matches and a can (to melt snow for water)
- Paper towels

Rethink your car supply kit as seasons change, and remember to replace batteries and any food or water every six months.

[CDC.gov Extreme Cold Safety Information](https://www.cdc.gov/extremecold)