

## Information You Need to Know:

- **ADVISORY** – Issued when weather conditions are occurring which are potentially hazardous.
- **WATCH** – Used to alert residents of a developing weather situation which is potentially hazardous.
- **WARNING** – Issued when weather conditions are occurring or imminent which are hazardous to life and/or property.

**There are generally five weather elements for which you may be advised or warned this winter.**

**Blizzard** – Sustained winds or frequent gusts to 35 mph or more and falling and/or blowing snow reducing visibility to less than 1/4 mile.

**Heavy Snow** – Snowfall ranging from six inches to one foot in 24 hours. Criterion varies regionally across Alaska.

**Freezing Rain** – Rain that freezes on impact on surfaces, such as trees, cars, and roads, forming a coating of ice.

**Wind Chill** – The temperature it “feels like” to people and animals, based on the rate of heat loss from exposed skin caused by the effects of wind and cold. Criterion varies regionally across Alaska.

**High Wind** – Sustained winds or frequent gusts exceeding 40 mph for an advisory and 60 mph for a warning.

### Other important winter weather definitions:

**Sleet** – Rain drops that freeze into ice pellets before reaching the ground.

**Flurries** – Light snow falling for short durations with little or no accumulation.

**Snow Showers** – Snow falling at varying intensities for brief periods of time. Significant accumulation is possible.

## Everyone is Potentially at Risk

**The threat of winter weather hazards to you depends on your specific situation.**

- The leading cause of death during winter storms is from automobile accidents.
- Exhaustion and heart attacks caused by overexertion are two more common causes of winter storm-related deaths.
- Elderly people account for the largest percentage of hypothermia victims, and often this occurs in the home.
- House fires occur more frequently due to a lack of proper safety precautions when using alternative heat sources.

Learn about winter storm risk in your area. Contact your local emergency management office, National Weather Service office, or American Red Cross chapter for more information.

[www.ak-prepared.com](http://www.ak-prepared.com)  
[www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org)

## Plan for a Winter Storm

- ✿ Develop a Family Disaster Plan.
- ✿ Understand the hazards you may face in your area.
- ✿ Service snow removal equipment before the winter season begins.
- ✿ Keep your car's gas tank full.
- ✿ Take a first aid course to learn how to treat exposure, frostbite, and hypothermia.
- ✿ Discuss with your family what to do if a winter storm WATCH or WARNING is issued for your area.

## Know These Winter Safety Tips

**If you are caught outside in a winter storm, try to find shelter:**

- ✓ Try to stay dry.
- ✓ Cover all exposed parts of the body.

**If you can't find shelter:**

- ✓ Prepare a lean-to, wind break, or snow cave for wind protection.
- ✓ Build a fire for heat and to attract attention.
- ✓ Place rocks around the fire to absorb and reflect heat.

**Do not eat snow** – It will lower your body temperature. Melt it first.

**If you are caught in a car or truck during a winter storm:**

- ✓ Stay in your vehicle. Disorientation occurs quickly in wind-driven snow and cold.
- ✓ Run the motor about ten minutes each hour for heat.
- ✓ Open a window a little for fresh air to avoid carbon monoxide poisoning.
- ✓ Make sure the exhaust pipe is not blocked.

**Make yourself visible** to rescuers.

- ✓ Turn on the dome light at night when running the engine.
- ✓ Tie a colored cloth (preferably red) to your antenna or door.
- ✓ Raise the hood indicating trouble after the snow stops falling.

**Exercise** from time to time by vigorously moving arms, legs, fingers, and toes to keep blood circulating and to keep warm.

# Are You Prepared for a WINTER STORM?

## Each year, there are preventable deaths.

- People perish from hypothermia and exhaustion due to exposure.
- Winter-related automobile accidents claim lives every year.
- Participants in winter sports and recreation fall victim to avalanches and other winter hazards.

## Alaska's winter can be particularly harsh.

- Extreme storms near the coast cause coastal flooding and beach erosion. Along the Bering Sea these storms can drive large chunks of sea ice inland.
- High winds combined with loose snow produce blinding blizzard conditions and extreme wind chill temperatures.
- Even relatively light winds combined with sub-zero temperatures produce dangerous wind chills.
- Heavy snow accumulations disrupt transportation and damage buildings and light aircraft.
- Heavy accumulations of ice bring down trees, electrical wires, telephone poles and lines, and communication towers.
- Extreme cold (below -40°F) and ice fog can shut down air travel for weeks over interior locations.
- Some winter storms produce hurricane force winds, knocking down power lines and damaging roofs and other structures.
- Mariners sometimes face heavy freezing spray and treacherous sea conditions.

A major winter storm can last several days.  
People can become trapped at home without utilities and other services.

## Get the Latest Forecasts and Bulletins

**NOAA Weather Radio** – A continuous broadcast of weather information provided by the National Weather Service. Reports air on one of seven VHF high-band FM frequencies between 162.400 and 162.550 megahertz.

Transmitters are located across the state in Anchorage, Barrow, Bethel, Cordova, Craig, Fairbanks, Haines, Homer, Juneau, Ketchikan, Kodiak, Kotzebue, Ninilchik, Nome, Sand Point, Seward, Sitka, Soldotna, Unalaska, Valdez, Wasilla, Whittier, Wrangell, Yakutat, and some mountain peaks (U.S. Coast Guard communication high sites).

Some NOAA Weather Radios have the capability to receive a tone alert signal, triggering a built-in alarm to warn listeners of severe weather bulletins. Receivers with Specific Area Message Encoding (SAME) technology allow the user to specify which warnings they wish to be alarmed for.

**Alaska Weather Information Line** – Statewide recorded menu system provided toll-free.

In Anchorage, call **266-5145**

In Juneau, call **790-6850**

In Fairbanks, call **458-3745**

Anywhere else in Alaska, call **1-800-472-0391**

The complete weather line menu can be found at:

<http://www.arh.noaa.gov/awil.pdf>

**NWS Internet pages –**

Alaska Region: <http://www.arh.noaa.gov>

Fairbanks Office: <http://pafg.arh.noaa.gov>

Anchorage Office: <http://pafc.arh.noaa.gov>

Juneau Office: <http://pajk.arh.noaa.gov>

Aviation Weather: <http://aawu.arh.noaa.gov>

# Winter Weather Hazards

## National Weather Service Alaska Region



American  
Red Cross