

**WINTER WEATHER PREPAREDNESS WEEK IN NORTH CAROLINA  
DECEMBER 3-9, 2017**

This week has been declared winter weather preparedness week in North Carolina. All week long the National Weather Service will be issuing informative messages to help you prepare for winter weather.

**Outlook for this winter:**

Forecasters at NOAA's Climate Prediction Center issued the U.S. Winter Outlook in late October, saying that La Nina is expected to influence winter conditions this year. La Nina favors drier, warmer winters in North Carolina. This climate outlook provides the most likely outcome for the upcoming winter season; however, regardless of the outlook, there is always some chance for extreme winter weather. With that in mind, everyone should use this week to prepare for the upcoming winter months and the possibility of winter storms.

**Winter Products:**

Winter Storm Watches and Warnings are issued by the NWS for potentially life-threatening conditions. Winter Storm Watches are issued when at least 3 inches of snow, and/or a 1/4 inch or more of ice accumulation is expected in a 12 to 24 hour period. They are typically issued within 24 to 48 hours of the storm. Winter Storm Warnings are issued when at least 3 inches of snow or ice accumulations of 1/4 inch or more are likely within 24 hours. A Winter Weather Advisory is issued when 1 to 3 inches of snow or ice accumulations of less than 1/4 inch are likely within 24 hours. A Blizzard Warning is issued when strong winds combine with falling and/or blowing snow to reduce visibility to one quarter mile or less for at least 3 hours. Finally, a Wind Chill Warning is issued when wind chill temperatures are forecast to reach 15 degrees below zero or colder.

**Winter Terminology:**

Freezing Rain is rain that falls and freezes to a cold surface such as a road or tree, causing a glaze of ice to form. Freezing rain forms when rain falls through a warm layer above the ground then freezes upon reaching the ground when the surface air and ground-level objects are below freezing. Freezing rain or "ice storms" can bring down trees and power lines, and severely hamper travel. Sleet is melted snow that has re-frozen into ice pellets prior to reaching the ground. Sleet forms in a similar manner to freezing rain. However, the layer of cold air near the ground is thick enough to allow the rain drops to re-freeze before reaching the ground. Sleet will bounce when it strikes a hard surface. Sleet can accumulate like snow and make a road slick, but it is not as hazardous as freezing rain. The term flurries refer to very light snow or snow that occurs for a short time period only causing a light dusting at best. Finally, the wind chill temperature is the "feel-like" temperature denoting the combined effect of wind and temperature on people and animals. Wind chill is based on the rate of heat loss from exposed skin. Wearing layers of clothing will help retain your body heat and combat wind chill. Once wind chill temperatures drop below -20 degrees Fahrenheit, exposed flesh can freeze in 30 minutes or less, causing frost bite.

Winter storms are deceptive killers because most deaths are indirectly related to the storm. Examples are traffic accidents due to icy roads, heart attacks while shoveling snow, fires, and carbon monoxide poisoning. The National Weather Service issues advisories, watches, and warnings to help you prepare for upcoming winter weather and take appropriate action to protect yourself and your property.

Additional winter weather preparedness resources:

NWS winter safety page: [https://www.weather.gov/wrn/winter\\_safety](https://www.weather.gov/wrn/winter_safety)

North Carolina Department of Public Safety preparedness page: <http://readync.org>

FEMA's Winter preparedness page: <https://www.ready.gov/winter-weather>