Winter Weather Safety

Know Your Risk, Take Action, Be a Force of Nature
Winter Weather Hazards

- Snow and sleet
- Blizzards
- Freezing rain
- Snow squalls
- Cold temperatures
- Strong winds
- Flooding
- Fog
Snow and sleet

- Snow and sleet primarily affect travel, but can also damage infrastructure
- Damage from winter storms exceeds $1 billion annually
- The NWS will issue a Winter Storm Warning, Winter Storm Watch, or Winter Weather Advisory
Blizzards

- Blizzards occur when strong winds cause blowing snow and whiteout conditions
- Do not travel during a Blizzard Warning, especially in open country
- The NWS will issue a Blizzard Warning
Freezing rain

• Freezing rain affects travel and can knock out power

• Have an emergency kit in case the power goes out

• The NWS will issue an Ice Storm Warning or Winter Weather Advisory
Snow squalls

- Snow squalls produce sudden white-out conditions, falling, temperatures, and icy roads
- These events are usually very short-lived (30-60 minutes) and extremely intense
- The NWS will issue a Snow Squall Warning
NWS Winter Storm Products

**WINTER STORM WATCH**

A Winter Storm Watch is issued when heavy snow, sleet, or freezing rain is possible.

Be prepared to adjust travel plans in case a Warning is issued.

**Be Prepared.**

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**WINTER STORM WARNING**

A Winter Storm Warning is issued when heavy snow, sleet, or freezing rain is expected.

Travel will become dangerous. Delay or adjust travel plans until conditions improve.

**Take Action!**

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Cold temperatures

- Cold weather can cause frostbite and/or hypothermia
- Dress in layers, cover exposed skin, and limit time outside
- The NWS will issue a Wind Chill Warning, Wind Chill Watch, or Wind Chill Advisory
NWS Cold Weather Products

**WIND CHILL WATCH**
A Wind Chill Watch is issued when very cold air and wind is possible.

Check the forecast, and be prepared in case a Warning is issued.

Be Prepared.

**WIND CHILL WARNING**
A Wind Chill Warning is issued when very cold air and wind is expected.

Conditions could lead to frostbite or hypothermia. Limit time outside, dress in layers, and cover up exposed skin.

Take Action!

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Prepare for winter

• Check the forecast to get the latest weather
• Plan accordingly based on the expected weather conditions
• Have a winter survival kit in your car if you must travel
• Dress appropriately if you must go outside

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Winter survival kit

• **For your car:** warm clothes, blanket, food, water, cell phone, charger

• **For your home:** food, water, medication, flash light, first aid kit
Strong winds

- Powerful winter storms can bring strong winds that cause damage
- Strong wind makes travel difficult, especially for large vehicles
- Seek shelter in a sturdy structure during strong winds
Driving when windy

- Slow down!
- Keep two hands on the wheel
- Distance yourself from trucks, buses, and vehicles towing trailers
- Keep an eye out for debris, downed power lines, and tree branches
NWS High Wind Products

**HIGH WIND WATCH**

A High Wind Watch is issued when sustained, strong winds are possible. Secure loose outdoor items and adjust plans if necessary so that you’re not caught outside.

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**HIGH WIND WARNING**

A High Wind Warning is issued when sustained, strong winds are happening or about to happen. Seek shelter in a sturdy structure. If driving, use caution — keep both hands on the wheel and slow down.

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**Be Prepared.**

**Take Action!**

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Flooding

- Flooding can be caused by heavy rain, snow melt, or ice jams
- More than half of all flood fatalities are vehicle-related
- Never drive through floodwaters
Ice Jams

- Ice jam flooding occurs when chunks of ice build up and prevent water from flowing downstream.
- This can lead to rapid rises upstream or downstream from the jam.
- Never drive through floodwaters.
Debris flows

- Debris flows are possible when rain falls on steep terrain or burn scars
- Soil, rocks, plants, and other objects may be swept downhill
- Never drive around barricades
NWS Flood Products

**FLOOD WATCH**

A Flood Watch is issued when flooding is possible.

Stay tuned to trusted news sources and be ready to seek higher ground.

**FLOOD WARNING**

A Flood Warning is issued when flooding is happening or about to happen.

Move to higher ground immediately! Never drive or walk through floodwaters.

**Be Prepared.**

**Take Action!**
Dense fog

• Dense fog poses a threat to motorists
• Slow down, don’t use cruise control
• Leave plenty of space between you and the vehicle in front of you
• Use your low-beam headlights
Winter Safety Resources

weather.gov/safety/winter
weather.gov/safety/cold
weather.gov/safety/wind
weather.gov/safety/flood
weather.gov/safety/fog