

Prepare Your Family: Away From Home



The Great Winter
Weather Prep



If a winter storm strands you away from home, you'll want to be prepared wherever you are. Keep frostbite and hypothermia far away with these tips.

In the Car

If you find yourself trapped in your car during a severe storm, these tips will keep you safe, warm, and alert:

- ✿ Prepare a special emergency kit for your car and keep it there throughout the season. If you use anything from it, be sure to replace any used items. In addition to the other emergency supplies you keep in your car, your winter weather car-kit should include:
 - A distress flag
 - Blankets
 - Extra food and water
 - Flashlights
- ✿ If visibility becomes bad, pull off the highway. Turn on hazard lights and hang a distress flag from the radio antenna or window.
- ✿ Remain in your vehicle where rescuers are most likely to find you. Do not set out on foot unless you can see a building close by where you know you can take shelter. Be careful; distances are distorted by blowing snow. A building may seem close, but be too far to walk to in deep snow.
- ✿ Run the engine and heater about 10 minutes each hour to keep warm. When the engine is running, open a downwind window slightly for ventilation and periodically clear snow from the exhaust pipe. This will protect you from possible carbon monoxide poisoning.
- ✿ Stay warm. Exercise to maintain body heat, but avoid overexertion. In extreme cold, use road maps, seat covers, and floor mats for insulation. Huddle with passengers and use your coat for a blanket.
- ✿ Take turns sleeping. One person should be awake at all times to look for rescue crews.
- ✿ Eat regularly and drink ample fluids to avoid dehydration, but avoid caffeine and alcohol.
- ✿ Be careful not to waste battery power. Balance electrical energy needs such as the use of lights, heat, and radio, with supply.
- ✿ Turn on the inside light at night so work crews or rescuers can see you.

- ✿ If stranded in a remote area, stomp large block letters in an open area spelling out HELP or SOS and line with rocks or tree limbs to attract the attention of rescue personnel who may be surveying the area by airplane.
- ✿ Leave the car and proceed on foot - if necessary - once the blizzard passes.

In the Elements

If have to go outside in severe winter weather, dress for the occasion. Also look for signs of frostbite and hypothermia:

- ✿ Wear several loose layers rather than one heavy layer of clothing. Make sure your outer layers are water repellent. Dry clothes are much warmer than wet ones.
- ✿ Mittens are warmer than gloves. Try a pair that has a fold back top to let your fingers free if you need them.
- ✿ Mom is right, you lose most of your body heat from the top of your head, so keep it covered up. While you're at it, protect your ears too.
- ✿ Keep the cold air out of your lungs by covering your mouth and nose with a warm scarf.
- ✿ When shoveling, make sure you are up to the task. Thousands of people suffer heart attacks from shoveling every year. Stretch before your shovel just as you would before any workout. If you think you need some extra help, ask a neighbor to be your Snow Angel Volunteer this winter.
- ✿ Watch for signs of frostbite and hypothermia including:
 - **Frostbite:** loss of feeling and white or pale appearance in extremities such as fingers, toes, ear lobes, and the tip of the nose.
 - **Hypothermia:** uncontrollable shivering, memory loss, disorientation, incoherence, slurred speech, drowsiness, and apparent exhaustion.

Source: [Department of Homeland Security - Ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov)

