

Upshur County Office of Emergency Management
Winter Weather Preparation

Before Winter Storms and Extreme Cold

To Prepare For A Winter Storm You Should Add The Following Supplies To Your Emergency Kit:

- Rock salt or more environmentally safe products to melt ice on walkways
- Sand to improve traction
- Snow shovels and other snow removal equipment
- Sufficient heating fuel - You may become isolated in your home and regular fuel sources may be cut off. Store a good supply of dry, seasoned wood for your fireplace or wood-burning stove.
- Adequate clothing and blankets to keep you warm

- Make a **Family Communications Plan**. Your family may not be together when disaster strikes, so it is important to know how you will contact one another, how you will get back together and what you will do in case of an emergency.
- Listen to a NOAA Weather Radio or other local news channels for critical information from the National Weather Service (NWS). Be alert to changing weather conditions. Upshur County Residents can receive **free** Weather Alerts by signing up for NIXLE at <http://www.NIXLE.com> and entering your zip code.
- Minimize travel - If travel is necessary, keep a disaster supplies kit in your vehicle.
- Bring pets/companion animals inside during winter weather. Move other animals or livestock to sheltered areas with non-frozen drinking water.

Winterize Your Vehicle

Check or have a mechanic check the following items on your car:

- Antifreeze levels - ensure they are sufficient to avoid freezing.
- Battery and ignition system - should be in top condition and battery terminals should be clean.
- Brakes - check for wear and fluid levels.
- Exhaust system - check for leaks and crimped pipes and repair or replace as necessary. Carbon monoxide is deadly and usually gives no warning.
- Fuel and air filters - replace and keep water out of the system by using additives and maintaining a full tank of gas. A full tank will keep the fuel line from freezing.
- Heater and defroster - ensure they work properly.
- Lights and flashing hazard lights - check for serviceability.
- Oil - check for level and weight. Heavier oils congeal more at low temperatures and do not lubricate as well.

- Thermostat - ensure it works properly .Windshield wiper equipment - repair any problems and maintain proper washer fluid level.
- Install good winter tires - Make sure the tires have adequate tread. All-weather radials are usually adequate for most winter conditions. However, some jurisdictions require that to drive on their roads, vehicles must be equipped with chains or snow tires with studs.

Update the emergency kits in your vehicles with:

- A shovel
- windshield scraper and small broom
- Flashlight
- Battery powered radio
- Extra batteries
- Water
- Snack food
- Matches
- Extra hats, socks and mittens
- First aid kit with pocket knife
- Necessary medications
- Blanket(s)
- Tow chain or rope
- Road salt and sand
- Booster cables
- Emergency flares
- Fluorescent distress flag

Winterize Your Home

- Winterize your home to extend the life of your fuel supply by insulating walls and attics, caulking and weather-stripping doors and windows, and installing storm windows or covering windows with plastic.
- Clear rain gutters; repair roof leaks and cut away tree branches that could fall on a house or other structure during a storm.
- Maintain heating equipment and chimneys by having them cleaned and inspected every year.
- Insulate pipes with insulation or newspapers and plastic and allow faucets to drip a little during cold weather to avoid freezing. Running water, even at a trickle, helps prevent pipes from freezing.

- All fuel-burning equipment should be vented to the outside and kept clear. Keep fire extinguishers on hand, and make sure everyone in your house knows how to use them. House fires pose an additional risk, as more people turn to alternate heating sources without taking the necessary safety precautions.
- Learn how to shut off water valves (in case a pipe bursts).
- Insulate your home by installing storm windows or covering windows with plastic from the inside to keep cold air out.

Know the Terms

Familiarize yourself with these terms to help identify a winter storm hazard:

Freezing Rain

Rain that freezes when it hits the ground, creating a coating of ice on roads, walkways, trees and power lines

Sleet

Rain that turns to ice pellets before reaching the ground. Sleet also causes moisture on roads to freeze and become slippery.

Watches

Winter Storm Watch

A winter storm is possible in your area. Tune in to NOAA Weather Radio, commercial radio, or television for more information.

Wind Chill Watch

Issued for the potential of wind chills of -25F or less, which can cause rapid frostbite and increase the risk of hypothermia.

Blizzard Watch

Issued for the possibility of blizzard conditions. Forecasters are typically 50 percent confident that blizzard conditions will materialize when a blizzard watch is issued.

Warnings

Winter Storm Warning

Issued for a combination of heavy snow and/or ice, of which, at least one exceeds or meets warning criteria. Winter weather is expected to cause life-threatening public impact for a combination of winter hazards including heavy snow, ice, near blizzard conditions, blowing and drifting snow and/or dangerous wind chills.

Heavy Snow Warning

Issued when 7 inches or more of snow is expected in 12 hours or less, or 9 inches or more is expected in 24 hours or less. Heavy Snow Warnings are issued when there is a high degree of confidence that the entire event will be snow.

Ice Storm Warning

Issued for a ½ inch or more of ice accumulation which causes damage to power lines and trees. Ice Storm Warnings

are issued when there is a high degree of confidence that the entire event is expected to be ice.

Blizzard Warning

Sustained winds or frequent gusts to 35 miles per hour or greater and considerable amounts of falling or blowing snow (reducing visibility to less than a quarter mile) are expected to prevail for a period of three hours or longer.

Frost/Freeze Warning

Below freezing temperatures are expected.

Wind Chill Warning

Issued when the wind chill is expected to be -25F or less. Frostbite can occur in less than 10 minutes.

Advisories

Winter Weather Advisory

Issued for a hazardous combination of snow, and ice of which neither meets, nor exceeds, warning criteria. Issued for winter weather that will cause significant inconveniences, or could be life-threatening, if the proper precautions are not taken.

Snow Advisory

Issued when an average of 4 to 6 inches of snow is expected in 12 hours or less. Snow advisories are issued when there is a high degree of confidence that the entire event will be snow.

Freezing Rain Advisory

Any accumulation of freezing rain that can make roads slippery. Freezing rain advisories will only be issued when there is a high degree of confidence that the entire event will be freezing rain only.

Snow and Blowing Snow Advisory

Sustained wind or frequent gusts of 25 to 34 mph accompanied by falling and blowing snow, occasionally reducing visibility to a 1/4 mile or less for three hours or more.

Blowing Snow Advisory

Widespread or localized blowing snow reducing visibilities to a 1/4 or less with winds less than 35 mph.

Wind Chill Advisory

Issued for wind chills of -15F to -24F. Frostbite can occur in less than 30 minutes.