

Red Cross Offers Safety Tips For Winter Storm Moving Into Missouri, Illinois, And Portions Of Arkansas

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ST. LOUIS —The American Red Cross of Missouri, Illinois, and Arkansas is offering safety tips ahead of the upcoming snow, ice, and frigid temperatures expected over the next few days. In addition, the Red Cross is coordinating with local emergency management officials and partners in preparation for potential local community needs.

Heavy snowfall is predicted in portions of Missouri with ice accumulations and extremely cold temperatures, according to the National Weather Service. Snow and colder than usual temperatures are also expected in portions of Arkansas.

Every year, hundreds of Americans are injured or killed by exposure to cold, vehicle accidents on wintry roads, and home fires caused by the improper use of heaters.

American Red Cross of Missouri and Arkansas offers the following tips to stay safe:

- Assemble an emergency preparedness kit to ensure you and your family have enough bottled water, non-perishable food and other items to stay safe at home for a few days without power if needed: <https://www.redcross.org/get-help/how-to-prepare-for-emergencies/survival-kit-supplies.html>

Vehicle safety:

- If you must travel, keep the vehicle's gas tank full to keep the fuel line from freezing and if you are required to stop due to traffic issues or detours.
- Carry the following in your vehicle: windshield scraper, small broom, sand or cat litter for traction, warm blankets and coats, and an emergency kit with bottled water, non-perishable food and medications.

Personal safety:

- Stay indoors if possible and wear warm clothes.
 - Layers of loose-fitting, lightweight, warm clothing will keep you warmer than a bulky sweater.
 - If you feel too warm, remove layers to avoid sweating; if you feel chilled, add layers.
- Stay safe outside:
 - If you must go outside, protect yourself from winter storm hazards:
 - Wear layered clothing, mittens or gloves, and a hat. Outer garments should be tightly woven and water repellent. Mittens or gloves and a hat will prevent the loss of body heat.
 - Cover your mouth to protect your lungs from severely cold air. Avoid taking deep breaths; minimize talking.
 - Watch for signs of hypothermia and frostbite.
 - Know the signs of hypothermia - confusion, dizziness, exhaustion and severe shivering. If someone has these symptoms, they should get immediate medical attention.

- Watch for symptoms of frostbite including numbness, flushed gray, white, blue or yellow skin discoloration, numbness or waxy feeling skin.
- Keep dry. Change wet clothing frequently to prevent a loss of body heat. Wet clothing loses much of its insulating value and transmits heat rapidly away from the body.
- Check on relatives, neighbors, and friends, particularly if they are elderly or live alone.

Pet Safety:

- Bring animals inside or ensure they have access to appropriate shelter, food and non-frozen water outside: <https://www.redcross.org/about-us/news-and-events/news/Winter-Safety-Tips-for-Your-Pets.html>

Space heater safety:

- All heaters need space. Keep children, pets and things that can burn (paper, matches, bedding, furniture, clothing, carpets, and rugs) at least three feet away from heating equipment.
- If you must use a space heater, place it on a level, hard and nonflammable surface (such as ceramic tile floor), not on rugs, carpets or near bedding or drapes. Plug power cords directly into outlets - never into an extension cord.
- Never leave a fire in the fireplace unattended and use a glass or metal fire screen to keep fire and embers in the fireplace.
- Never use a cooking range or oven to heat your home.
- Turn off portable space heaters every time you leave the room or go to sleep.

Water pipe safety:

- Protect pipes from freezing by taking the following precautions.:
 - Keep garage doors closed if there are water supply lines in the garage.
 - Open kitchen and bathroom cabinet doors to allow warmer air to circulate around the plumbing. Be sure to move any harmful cleaners and household chemicals up out of the reach of children.
 - When the weather is very cold outside, let the cold water drip from the faucet served by exposed pipes. Running water through the pipe - even at a trickle - helps prevent pipes from freezing.
 - Keep the thermostat set to the same temperature both during the day and at night. By temporarily suspending the use of lower nighttime temperatures, you may incur a higher heating bill, but you can prevent a much more costly repair job if pipes freeze and burst.

- If you will be going away during cold weather, leave the heat on in your home, set to a temperature no lower than 55° F.
- See additional tips <https://www.redcross.org/get-help/how-to-prepare-for-emergencies/types-of-emergencies/winter-storm/frozen-pipes.html>
- The following steps are suggested to help pipes thaw:
 - If you turn on a faucet and only a trickle comes out, suspect a frozen pipe. Likely places for frozen pipes include against exterior walls or where your water service enters your home through the foundation.
 - Keep the faucet open. As you treat the frozen pipe and the frozen area begins to melt, water will begin to flow through the frozen area. Running water through the pipe will help melt ice in the pipe.
 - Apply heat to the section of pipe using an electric heating pad wrapped around the pipe, an electric hairdryer, a portable space heater (kept away from flammable materials), or by wrapping pipes with towels soaked in hot water. Do not use a blowtorch, kerosene or propane heater, charcoal stove, or another open flame device.
 - Apply heat until the full water pressure is restored. If you can't thaw the pipe, call a licensed plumber.
 - Check all other faucets in your home to find out if you have additional frozen pipes. If one pipe freezes, others may freeze, too.

Download Red Cross APPS for instant access to weather alerts for their area and where loved ones live. Expert medical guidance and a hospital locator are included in the First Aid App in case travelers encounter any mishaps. Both apps are available to download for free in-app stores or at [redcross.org/apps](https://www.redcross.org/apps).

About the American Red Cross:

The American Red Cross shelters, feeds and provides emotional support to victims of disasters; supplies about 40 percent of the nation's blood; teaches skills that save lives; provides international humanitarian aid; and supports military members and their families. The Red Cross is a not-for-profit organization that depends on volunteers and the generosity of the American public to perform its mission. For more information, please visit [redcross.org](https://www.redcross.org) or [cruzrojaamericana.org](https://www.cruzrojaamericana.org), or visit us on Twitter at @RedCross.