



American Red Cross Offers Safety Tips For Winter Storm

by Sharon Watson

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ST. LOUIS - The American Red Cross of Missouri and Arkansas is offering safety tips for the snow and dangerous temperatures and windchills. In addition, the Red Cross is coordinating with local emergency management officials and partners in the preparation of potential local community needs.

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.

“We urge everyone to take steps for the possibility of dangerous temperatures and windchills, and snow in some areas, so please plan ahead if you will be traveling or must be outside in these conditions,” said Chris Harmon, Regional Disaster Officer, American Red Cross of Missouri and Arkansas. “Also, be prepared for the possibility of power outages and have an emergency kit ready. Plan to take action now to avoid frozen pipes and to keep pets safe in the dangerously cold temperatures.”

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 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, and 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 hair dryer, 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 other open flame devices.
 - 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.

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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](https://twitter.com/RedCross).