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Winter Storm Ready Checklist

FREE PRINTABLE

A short, printable plan for the next ice storm or winter outage. Fill it out before the forecast turns, print it at 100% on US Letter paper, and keep a paper copy where everyone in the house can find it.

01 **Before the storm**
Water, pipes, food, heat, and travel prep.

02 **Kit checklist**
What to pack for the house, and a few write-in lines.

03 **During an outage**
Stay warm and safe. Carbon monoxide rules are on this page.

04 **After the storm**
Food safety, pipes, downed lines, and restocking.

05 **Emergency contacts**
Numbers, medical notes, and a meeting place — on paper.

Safety notes in this packet follow official guidance from Ready.gov, the CDC, and FoodSafety.gov. It is not a substitute for local emergency alerts or the instructions that come with your own equipment. Never use a generator, grill, camp stove, or charcoal indoors, in a garage, or near windows.

Before the storm

Start this list when a Winter Storm Watch or Warning is issued, or as soon as freezing rain or a hard freeze is in the forecast. Ready.gov: a Watch is usually 12–48 hours out; a Warning is usually 12–24 hours out, or already happening.

ALERTS, LIGHT, AND POWER

- [ ] Sign up for local emergency alerts, and program a NOAA weather radio for your counties.
- [ ] Charge phones, power banks, and any portable power station.
- [ ] Set out a flashlight or headlamp for each person, plus a lantern for the main room. Prefer battery lights over candles.
- [ ] Test smoke alarms and carbon monoxide alarms with battery backup, especially near bedrooms.
- [ ] Write down important phone numbers on the contacts page in this packet, in case phones die.
- [ ] Get some cash. Card readers can go down with the power.

CAR AND TRAVEL

- [ ] Fill the gas tank. Pumps need electricity.
- [ ] Put a blanket, water, snacks, a flashlight, a phone charger, and an ice scraper in the car.
- [ ] Plan to stay off the roads once ice starts. Ready.gov: stay off roads if at all possible.

WATER, FOOD, AND MEDICINE

- [ ] Store about 1 gallon of water per person per day for several days (Ready.gov), and count pets. Fill the tub for toilet flushing if you are on a well pump.
- [ ] Stock several days of food that needs little or no cooking or refrigeration, plus a manual can opener (FoodSafety.gov).
- [ ] Put an appliance thermometer in the fridge and the freezer.
- [ ] Freeze extra water bottles or gel packs to help keep food cold later.
- [ ] Refill prescriptions. Set aside medicines, glasses, hearing-aid batteries, and any medical-device chargers.
- [ ] Set out pet food, extra water, and leashes.

HOME AND PIPES

- [ ] Know where the main water shut-off valve is.
- [ ] Open cabinet doors under sinks so warm air can reach pipes. Disconnect outdoor hoses.
- [ ] Close storm windows, cut drafts, and hang blankets or film on the leakiest panes if you have them.
- [ ] Bring pets in, and bring in loose yard items that ice or wind could move.

DECIDE THESE NOW, AND WRITE THEM DOWN

Room we'll keep warm _____

Where the kit is kept _____

Water shut-off is _____

People we will check on _____

Sources: Ready.gov (Winter Weather; Build a Kit), CDC winter-storm safety, and FoodSafety.gov (food and water before a power outage).

Kit checklist

Keep a household kit in one or two easy-to-carry containers, and make sure everyone knows where it is. Ready.gov's basic disaster supplies kit is the backbone; add what your household actually uses. Check items you already have, then shop for the rest before the storm.

WATER AND FOOD

- [ ] Water: about 1 gallon per person per day for several days, plus pets
- [ ] Non-perishable food for several days, and a manual can opener
- [ ] Paper plates, cups, and utensils if you may be without water for washing
- [ ] Pet food and extra water

LIGHT, RADIO, AND POWER

- [ ] Flashlight or headlamp, plus extra batteries
- [ ] Battery or hand-crank radio, ideally a NOAA weather radio with tone alert
- [ ] Charged power bank and phone cables
- [ ] Backup batteries for medical devices, hearing aids, or a CPAP (confirm with the device maker)

WARMTH AND SLEEP

- [ ] Sleeping bag or warm blanket for each person
- [ ] Hats, gloves, and dry socks
- [ ] A foam pad or extra blankets to insulate against a cold floor
- [ ] Indoor-safe lighting (battery lantern). Avoid candles if you can.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

- [ ] First aid kit
- [ ] Prescription medicines and a printed list of doses
- [ ] Glasses, contact solution, and other daily aids
- [ ] Battery-powered carbon monoxide and smoke alarms, tested
- [ ] Fire extinguisher, if you have one, in a known location

TOOLS AND DOCUMENTS

- [ ] Wrench or pliers to shut off utilities
- [ ] Whistle to signal for help
- [ ] Copies of IDs, insurance cards, and important documents in a waterproof pouch
- [ ] Local paper map, pencil, and this printed packet
- [ ] Cash in small bills

SANITATION AND EXTRAS

- [ ] Moist towelettes, garbage bags, and hand sanitizer
- [ ] Any needed incontinence or personal-care supplies
- [ ] Matches in a waterproof container (for outdoor use only)
- [ ] Dust mask, plastic sheeting, scissors, and duct tape (Ready.gov shelter-in-place items)

WRITE IN WHAT YOUR HOUSEHOLD ALSO NEEDS

- [ ] _____
- [ ] _____
- [ ] _____
- [ ] _____
- [ ] _____
- [ ] _____

Sources: Ready.gov (Build a Kit) and FoodSafety.gov (at least a 3-day food and water supply; 1 gallon of water per person and pet per day).

During an outage

Work through this list in order. The safety box is the part that cannot be skipped. If anyone feels dizzy, nauseated, or has a headache and a fuel-burning device is in use, get to fresh air and seek medical help — those can be signs of carbon monoxide poisoning.

NEVER DO THIS — CARBON MONOXIDE AND FIRE

Never use a generator, gas or charcoal grill, camp stove, or similar device inside the home, in a basement, in a garage, or near windows. Never heat the house with a gas stovetop or oven. Never bring an outdoor-rated patio or construction heater indoors.

Generators belong outdoors and at least 20 feet from windows, doors, and attached garages (Ready.gov and the CDC). Follow the manufacturer's ventilation instructions. Keep a working, battery-powered carbon monoxide alarm on every level, especially near bedrooms.

If you use an electric space heater, and only if you still have power: keep it at least 3 feet from drapes, furniture, and bedding; never cover it; avoid extension cords; and do not leave it unattended. Use battery lanterns rather than candles if you can.

KEEP ONE ROOM LIVABLE

- ☐ Pick one occupied room. Close unused rooms, put towels under doors, and cover windows at night (CDC).
- ☐ Dress in layers. A hat and dry socks help. Wool, silk, or polypropylene hold more body heat than cotton as a base layer (CDC).
- ☐ Use extra blankets or a sleeping bag, and put a pad or blankets under you so heat is not lost to a cold floor.
- ☐ Eat regular meals. The CDC warns that alcohol and caffeine can make the body lose heat faster; choose warm, non-alcoholic drinks if your doctor has not restricted them.
- ☐ Use a power station, if you have one, for phones, a radio, lights, medical devices, and a router — not for space heaters.

WATER, FOOD, AND PIPES

- ☐ Keep fridge and freezer doors closed. FoodSafety.gov: a closed refrigerator stays cold about 4 hours; a full closed freezer about 48 hours; a half-full freezer about 24 hours.
- ☐ If you still have water pressure, drip faucets and leave sink-cabinet doors open to help protect pipes (CDC). Know where the shut-off valve is.
- ☐ Do not thaw frozen pipes with a torch. If you cannot thaw them safely, use stored or bottled water.
- ☐ Listen for boil-water notices some utilities issue after pumps or treatment plants lose power, and follow any notice that is issued.
- ☐ Stay inside if roads and walkways are icy. Walking on ice is extremely dangerous (CDC).

WATCH PEOPLE, NOT JUST THE HOUSE

- ☐ Check on neighbors, especially older adults, people with medical needs, and families with infants.
- ☐ Watch for hypothermia: shivering, exhaustion, confusion, fumbling hands, memory loss, slurred speech, or drowsiness. A body temperature below 95°F is an emergency (Ready.gov and the CDC). Warm the center of the body first and get medical help.
- ☐ Stay far from downed or sagging power lines, and from anything they are touching. Report them to the utility. Limbs and lines can still fall as ice melts.
- ☐ Skip heavy outdoor cleanup while ice is still on trees. Ready.gov warns that overexertion in winter weather raises the risk of a heart attack.

Sources: Ready.gov (Winter Weather; generator safety) and CDC (Safety Guidelines: During & After a Winter Storm). Food times: FoodSafety.gov.

After the storm

Ice can linger on bridges, overpasses, and shaded pavement after the sun comes out. Trees and lines can still fail as ice melts and branches shift. Go slowly, and treat the first trip outside as a safety check, not a cleanup sprint.

OUTSIDE AND ON THE ROAD

- [ ] Wait for official word that roads are passable before you drive. Bridges and shaded spots can stay icy.
- [ ] Look from a safe distance for hanging limbs, damaged service drops, and ice on the roof or gutters before you walk the yard.
- [ ] Stay far from downed or sagging lines. Call the utility. Do not try to move a line or a tree that is touching one.
- [ ] Clear steps and walkways with de-icer or sand before anyone has to use them. The CDC notes that many winter injuries are falls on ice.
- [ ] If you must shovel or haul debris, dress warmly and work slowly. People with heart disease or high blood pressure should follow their doctor's advice about hard work in the cold (CDC).

POWER, HEAT, AND PIPES

- [ ] When the power returns, confirm that the furnace or heat pump restarts and that vents are clear.
- [ ] Check for frozen or burst pipes before opening the water fully. If a pipe has broken, shut the main valve and use stored water.
- [ ] Recharge phones, power banks, radios, and medical-device batteries.
- [ ] Reset clocks, and restock the food, water, batteries, and medicines you used so the kit is ready again.
- [ ] If a generator was running, let it cool before you refuel or move it, and store fuel only as the manufacturer instructs — never indoors, where fumes can ignite (CDC).

FOOD SAFETY WHEN THE POWER COMES BACK

Follow FoodSafety.gov, not smell or appearance alone:

- [ ] A refrigerator that was kept closed should keep food safe about 4 hours. Discard perishable food (meat, poultry, fish, eggs, leftovers, dairy) that was above 40°F for 2 hours or more, or if the power was out for 4 hours or more.
- [ ] If a freezer thermometer reads 40°F or below, or food still has ice crystals and feels as cold as if refrigerated, it may be refrozen or cooked. Discard perishable food that has thawed and warmed above that.
- [ ] Do not put perishable food out in the snow to keep it cold. Outside temperatures vary, and food can pick up dirt or animals. Freeze water in containers instead, and use that ice in the fridge or a cooler.
- [ ] When in doubt, throw it out.

NOTES FROM THIS STORM (WHAT TO FIX BEFORE THE NEXT ONE)

Sources: FoodSafety.gov (Food Safety in a Disaster or Emergency) and CDC (Safety Guidelines: During & After a Winter Storm).

Emergency contacts

Fill this page now, not during the outage. Ready.gov recommends a written list of numbers in case phones die, plus copies of insurance and ID. Look up official local numbers — do not guess.

HOUSEHOLD

Home address _____

Household names _____

CALL FOR HELP

Life-threatening 911

Poison Help (U.S.) 1-800-222-1222

Non-emergency police / fire _____

Electric utility _____

Gas utility _____

Water utility _____

Outage report # _____

PEOPLE WHO CAN HELP

Out-of-area contact _____

Their phone _____

Neighbor / key holder _____

Their phone _____

Caregiver / family _____

Their phone _____

Check-in plan _____

MEDICAL AND INSURANCE

Primary doctor _____

Pharmacy _____

Veterinarian _____

Home insurance _____

Hospital / clinic _____

Medical insurance _____

Policy / member # _____

Who has an extra key _____

Allergies, conditions, and medical devices (and any backup-power notes)

_____

_____

Current prescriptions (name, dose, schedule) — or “see attached list”

_____

_____

IF WE HAVE TO LEAVE

Meeting place (near home) _____

Meeting place (out of area) _____

Sources: Ready.gov (Build a Kit; Older Adults). Poison Help 1-800-222-1222 is the national U.S. number. Confirm all other local numbers yourself.