

READY TOGETHER FOUNDATION
COMMUNITY PREPAREDNESS RESOURCE LIBRARY

RTF-115

Extreme Cold Safety Guide

A Practical Guide to Protecting Your Family During Freezing
Temperatures and Cold Weather Emergencies

Building Resilient Communities Together

Extreme Cold Can Be Life-Threatening

Extreme cold can affect anyone. Freezing temperatures, strong winds, snow, and ice increase the risk of hypothermia, frostbite, falls, and power outages.

Planning ahead helps families stay warm, healthy, and safe during periods of extreme cold.

Preparedness begins before temperatures fall.

Why Extreme Cold Preparedness Matters

Preparing for extreme cold helps your family:

- Prevent cold-related illnesses.
- Stay warm during power outages.
- Protect children, older adults, and vulnerable family members.
- Travel more safely.
- Recover more quickly after winter emergencies.

Preparation saves lives.

Before Cold Weather Arrives

Take these important steps:

- ☐ Monitor weather forecasts.
- ☐ Inspect your home's heating system.
- ☐ Stock extra blankets and warm clothing.
- ☐ Prepare your emergency kit.
- ☐ Protect exposed water pipes where appropriate.
- ☐ Check smoke and carbon monoxide alarms.
- ☐ Prepare your vehicle for winter travel.

Preparedness today provides comfort tomorrow.

Staying Warm Safely

During periods of extreme cold:

- ☐ Dress in several loose-fitting layers.
- ☐ Wear gloves, a hat, scarf, and insulated footwear.
- ☐ Keep your home heated to a safe temperature.
- ☐ Close curtains at night to help retain warmth.
- ☐ Stay indoors when conditions become dangerous.

Never use outdoor heating equipment inside your home.

Recognize Cold-Related Illnesses

Hypothermia

Warning signs include:

- ☐ Intense shivering.
- ☐ Confusion.
- ☐ Slurred speech.
- ☐ Drowsiness.
- ☐ Loss of coordination.

Seek medical attention immediately if symptoms become severe.

Frostbite

Watch for:

- ☐ Numbness.
- ☐ White, gray, or waxy skin.
- ☐ Hard or cold skin.
- ☐ Loss of feeling in fingers, toes, ears, or nose.

Protect exposed skin whenever temperatures are dangerously low.

Power Outages During Cold Weather

If your power goes out:

- ☐ Stay together in one warm room.
- ☐ Wear extra layers.
- ☐ Use blankets to conserve body heat.
- ☐ Keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed.
- ☐ Follow official emergency updates.
- ☐ Go to a warming center if your home becomes unsafe.

Safe Heating Practices

Remember:

- ☐ Keep heaters away from curtains and furniture.
- ☐ Never leave portable heaters unattended.
- ☐ Test smoke alarms regularly.
- ☐ Ensure carbon monoxide alarms are working.

Fire safety is an important part of winter safety.

Traveling in Cold Weather

Before traveling:

- ☐ Check weather and road conditions.

- ☐ Carry a winter emergency kit.
- ☐ Tell someone your travel plans.
- ☐ Keep your fuel tank at least half full.
- ☐ Charge your mobile phone.

If stranded, remain with your vehicle unless staying would be unsafe.

Protecting Children

Children lose body heat more quickly than adults.

- ☐ Dress children warmly.
- ☐ Keep extra clothing available.
- ☐ Limit outdoor exposure.
- ☐ Encourage warm drinks and regular meals.

Prepared children stay safer in cold weather.

Protecting Older Adults

Older adults may be more vulnerable to extreme cold.

Ensure they have:

- ☐ Reliable heating.
- ☐ Warm clothing.
- ☐ Prescription medications.
- ☐ Emergency contacts.
- ☐ Regular check-ins from family or neighbors.

Caring for Pets

Remember your pets.

- ☐ Bring pets indoors whenever possible.
- ☐ Provide warm shelter.
- ☐ Ensure fresh drinking water does not freeze.
- ☐ Limit outdoor exposure.
- ☐ Watch for signs of cold stress.

Pets depend on us for their protection.

Ready Together Action

Complete these three steps this week:

- ☐ Check your heating system.
- ☐ Prepare extra blankets and warm clothing.
- ☐ Place a winter emergency kit in your vehicle.

Prepared families stay safe throughout the winter.

Review Your Cold Weather Preparedness

Review your plan:

- ☐ Before winter begins.
- ☐ Before forecasted cold spells.
- ☐ Every six months.
- ☐ After changes in household members.

Preparedness is an ongoing commitment.

About Ready Together Foundation

Ready Together Foundation is dedicated to building resilient communities through emergency preparedness, emergency relief and response, youth engagement, and outreach to vulnerable populations.

Our work focuses on:

- Community Emergency Preparedness
- Emergency Relief & Response
- Youth Preparedness & Leadership
- Vulnerable Population Outreach

Together, we are building stronger, safer, and more resilient communities.

Ready Together Foundation

Building Resilient Communities Together

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Preparedness is a journey, not a one-time event. Every small step you take today helps protect the people you care about tomorrow.