



NJ Office of Emergency Management

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

November 15, 2005

NJOEM's Winter Weather Awareness Week: Blizzards, Snowstorms and Power Outages

(TRENTON, NJ) – Colonel Rick Fuentes, Superintendent of New Jersey State Police and Director of the New Jersey Office of Emergency Management, is celebrating Winter Weather Awareness Week beginning today and ending Friday.

Each day will bring a new message on family preparedness during the winter months.

Today's message: **Blizzards, Snowstorms and Power Outages.**

Blizzards and Other Snowstorms

Severe snowstorms can be lethal. Heavy snow can immobilize cities or whole regions, even interrupting the flow of supplies and of emergency and medical services. The buildup of snow can collapse buildings, trees and power lines. In rural areas, homes may be isolated for days.

Blizzards are particularly dangerous. They include heavy snow driven by winds of at least 35 mph, reducing visibility to near zero.

These events can be fatal, and most deaths are only indirectly related to the storm itself. The leading cause of death during winter storms is automobile and other transportation accidents. Exhaustion and heart attacks can also kill, as the cold weather puts an additional strain on the heart.

If you are caught outside during a winter storm, immediately try to find shelter. You must stay dry and cover all exposed parts of the body. If shelter is not available, prepare a lean-to, windbreak or snow cave for protection from the wind. Build a fire to stay warm and to attract help. Place rocks around the fire to absorb and reflect heat. Do not eat snow, as it will lower your body temperature. Melt it first.

If you are caught in your car or truck during a winter storm, stay inside the vehicle. You can easily become disoriented in wind-driven snow and cold. Run the motor about 10 minutes each hour for heat. Make sure the exhaust pipe is not blocked, and keep a window partly open to avoid carbon monoxide poisoning.

Make your vehicle visible to rescuers by turning on the dome light at night while running the engine; by tying a colored cloth to your antenna or door; and by raising the hood to indicate trouble after the snow stops falling. Be sure to exercise from time to time by vigorously moving arms, legs, fingers and toes.

If you are caught at home or in a building during a winter storm, stay inside.

If using alternate heat from a fireplace, wood stove, space heater, or other source, be sure to follow all of that heat source's fire safety precautions. Properly ventilate the heat source to avoid carbon monoxide poisoning.

If no heat is available, close off all unneeded rooms. Stuff towels or rags in the cracks under doors. Close the windows at night.

Be sure to eat and drink. Food helps the body produce its own heat, and fluids prevent dehydration. Wear layers of loose-fitting, lightweight, warm clothing. Remove layers to avoid overheating, perspiration and chill.

Power Outages

If someone in the home is on life-support or otherwise electric dependent due to a disability, immediately notify your utility company and your local police department.

For all families, call your utility company to determine area repair schedules. Turn off or unplug lights and appliances to prevent a circuit overload when power returns. Leave one light on to let you know when power has been restored.

Turn on faucets slightly to prevent pipes from freezing. Running water will not freeze as quickly.

Protect yourself from carbon monoxide poisoning. Do not operate generators indoors. Do not use charcoal to cook indoors. Do not use your gas oven to heat your home. All of these activities can cause a deadly buildup of carbon monoxide. To stay safe, operate space heaters with proper ventilation.

Keep your refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible to avoid food spoilage.

Family Preparedness

For New Jersey residents, the basics of preparedness for blizzards, snowstorms and power outages are virtually the same as preparedness for all hazards, natural or manmade:

- **FIRST:** Arm yourself and your family members with an **Emergency Supply Kit** and an **Emergency Action Plan**.
 - Your **Emergency Supply Kit** should include a blanket, a battery-powered radio, a first aid kit, one week's prescription medications, personal toiletries, infant care items, three days' worth of non-perishable food and water (one gallon of water per person per day), a can opener, and cash or travelers checks. For more, visit the American Red Cross website: www.redcross.org/disaster/safety/fds-all.pdf.
 - Your **Emergency Action Plan** should include an out-of-town contact your family members will call or email to check on each other, a predetermined meeting place away from your home, and specific plans for individuals with special needs or disabilities. For more, visit the American Red Cross website: www.redcross.org/static/file_cont36_lang0_23.pdf.
- **NEXT:** Pay attention to **weather media and your local radio or television stations** for **weather updates** and for **official instructions** from **Public Safety Officials**.
- **If you live in an area prone to flooding: Know your evacuation route.** You can find maps of New Jersey's coastal evacuation routes at the New Jersey Office of Emergency Management's website, www.nj.gov/njoem. In all areas, call local Emergency Management officials or Police Department for details on your evacuation plan.

Further information on all-hazards preparedness for families can be found at the New Jersey Office of Emergency Management's website, www.state.nj.us/njoem.

Similar information can be found in "Plain Talk on Terrorism Preparedness," available from the New Jersey Domestic Security Preparedness Task Force at www.njhomelandsecurity.com/Plain-Talk-12.08.04.pdf; and in "Ready Together New Jersey," from the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services, at <http://www.njhomelandsecurity.com/ready-together-brochure.html>.

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