

# EXTREME COLD READINESS GUIDE

## Understanding Extreme Cold

Extreme cold can create dangerous conditions for households, vehicles, and infrastructure. Low temperatures, wind chill, ice, and snow can lead to hypothermia, frostbite, power outages, heating failures, and limited mobility. Preparing ahead of time keeps your home warm, your family safe, and your essentials protected.

## 1. Know the Risks

### What extreme cold can cause

- Rapid indoor temperature drop during outages
- Frozen or burst pipes
- Dangerous wind chills
- Road closures and stranded vehicles
- Carbon monoxide buildup from unsafe heating
- Limited access to food, water, or medical support

### Warning signs of worsening conditions

- Falling temperatures with high wind
- Freezing rain or sleet
- Heavy snowfall that blocks vents or tailpipes
- Power fluctuations or grid strain
- Reduced visibility
- Cold-related symptoms in people or pets

## 2. Prepare Your Home

### Insulate and seal

- Add weatherstripping to doors and windows
- Place rugs or blankets on bare floors
- Hang thick curtains to reduce heat loss
- Use towels or draft stoppers along door gaps

### Protect your plumbing

- Insulate exposed pipes
- Open cabinet doors under sinks during extreme cold
- Let faucets drip slowly during deep freezes
- Disconnect and drain outdoor hoses
- Know your main water shutoff valve

### Heating readiness

- Check and clean furnace filters
- Test smoke and carbon monoxide detectors
- Keep an indoor safe propane heater if appropriate
- Store extra blankets, sleeping bags, and warm clothing

### 3. Staying Warm During Power Outages

#### Create a warm room

- Choose a small interior room
- Close doors to unused areas
- Bring bedding, warm clothes, water, and food
- Block drafts with towels or blankets

#### Use a small camping tent indoors

A tent creates a microclimate that holds heat more effectively than an open room. Set up the tent inside the warm room and add sleeping bags, cushions, and blankets. Gathering family members and pets inside the tent increases shared warmth and improves comfort during cold nights.

#### Safe heating options

- Indoor rated propane heaters
- Battery powered heaters
- Hot water bottles or heated containers

#### Heating methods to avoid

- Charcoal grills
- Camp stoves
- Gas ovens
- Outdoor propane heaters
- Generators in garages or near doors

### 4. Prevent Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

#### Prevention steps

- Install CO detectors on every floor
- Replace batteries before winter
- Clear furnace and dryer vents of snow
- Clear vehicle tailpipes before idling
- Provide ventilation when using indoor propane heaters

#### Symptoms to watch for

- Headache
- Dizziness
- Nausea
- Weakness
- Confusion
- Shortness of breath

## 5. Prepare Your Vehicle

### Winterize your car

- Check tire tread and pressure
- Install winter wipers
- Top off antifreeze
- Keep the gas tank at least half full
- Test the battery

### Vehicle winter kit

- Blankets
- Extra clothing
- Ice scraper
- Small shovel
- Sand or kitty litter
- Jumper cables
- Flashlight
- Water and snacks

**If stranded:** Stay with the vehicle, crack a window, clear the tailpipe, and run the heat periodically.

## 6. Food, Water, and Essentials

- Food that requires no cooking
- Three days of drinking water
- Pet supplies
- Medications
- Extra batteries
- Backup lighting
- Printed emergency contact list

## 7. Communication and Planning

- Emergency contact numbers
- Meeting location if separated
- When to shelter in place
- How to check on neighbors

## 8. Caring for Pets

- Keep pets indoors
- Provide warm bedding
- Ensure water dishes stay unfrozen
- Limit outdoor time

## More Information

**Winter Weather Guidance:** <https://www.ready.gov/winter-weather>

**Extreme Cold Page:** <https://readyforunsteady.com/extreme-cold/>