

SEPTEMBER IS NATIONAL PREPAREDNESS MONTH

BLIZZARD TIPS

Snow can be so heavy during a blizzard that it causes a *whiteout*. During a whiteout, snow falling down...or being blown around by the tremendous winds...reduces visibility to the point where the sky, the air, and the ground become one white blur of snow. All you can see in any direction is white snow. The winds and snow cause disorientation and, especially in rural areas, sometimes you can wander just a few feet from your front door and not be able to find it.

What are the necessary steps that should be taken to prepare for a blizzard?

1. Prepare for power outages and blocked roads. Winds, ice and snow tend to bring down power lines. Make sure that you have candles, matches or lighters, a flashlight, a battery-operated radio, and emergency food supplies and tons of blankets. Have plenty of food staples like powdered milk and protein bars. If your water supply depends on an electric pump, bottled water may be a good idea.

2. Staying warm when the power goes out may be a problem. Don't think you're immune if you don't use electricity to heat your home. Many people don't realize that their heating system depends on a boiler that is powered by electricity. Electric stoves and gas stoves that depend on electricity will be powerless if the storm knocks the lines down. Be prepared with alternative heat sources and plenty of blankets.

3. Traveling in a blizzard is just not a good idea. If you are on the road during a blizzard look for a hotel or motel nearby and stay off the road until driving conditions are safe again.

4. If you get stranded in your car during a bad snow storm be prepared with plenty of warm clothes and packaged snack foods. It may seem sensible to leave the engine running to keep warm, but it isn't. The danger of carbon monoxide poisoning is high. Snow can block your exhaust pipe and fill the car with deadly fumes. Keeping one window open just a bit will help avoid this. If you keep the engine running you may run out of gas before the storm is over.

A better idea is to run the engine in short bursts. Turn the engine on long to keep the car warm and then turn it off. Keep this routine up until the conditions are stable enough for you to get

back on the road.

5. Designate a spot, in the hall closet, to keep a bag of warm clothes for each person in the household. If the lights are out, it will be hard to find that really warm turtle neck or a pair of warm socks or gloves...in the dark. Count on the power being out for at least a day or two and have some board games and a deck of cards on hand. Arts and crafts are always fun for the kids (especially if there isn't any television to distract them) so make sure you have some of those supplies easily available.

6. Along with warm clothes and blankets, consider stocking your Blizzard Kit with the following: batteries, flash lights, battery operated radio/television, bottled water, toilet paper, nonperishable foods such as cereal or crackers, canned goods, a non electric can opener, a small cooler, candles, prescription medicines and any over-the-counter remedies you use regularly; and if you have young infants or

7. Stock up on shovels and snow removal equipment before the snow storm. You may also want to cover the windows and spaces around the doors to keep drafts at a minimum in the event the heat shuts off.

8. If you live in an area that gets bad storms regularly consider investing in an emergency generator. Having an alternate source of power if the main lines go down can be a life saver.

9. A cellular phone is a 'hot' commodity for the snowbound. If you have a cell phone, make sure it is charged and easy to find. Now is the time to add emergency numbers in your phone's memory for easy access when you need them. Even if the phone and power lines go out you can get word out that you are stranded and need help.

10. Finally, STAY INSIDE. However tempting it may be for kids to go out and make snow angels or play in the falling snow, use caution. Those blowing winds - both before and after a blizzard - are cold enough to cause frostbite, and snowdrifts may hide dangers children might otherwise see. Stay indoors where it's safe, and warm!

Blizzards are serious business. Weather forecasters can only predict so much. Educate yourself and stay on top of the updates in your area. There is no harm in being overly cautious. In most cases where a blizzard is concerned, it truly is better to be safe than sorry.