

In Virginia, Winter Preparedness Week kicks off on 01 Dec and runs to 07 Dec. All it takes is one heavy snow that sticks around for several days or an ice storm that knocks out power to remind us that being prepared ahead of time just makes sense. Go to www.ReadyVirginia.gov and print out an emergency supply checklist and a family emergency plan. Now is the time to get ready for winter weather.

Did you know that the National Weather Service refers to winter storms as the “Deceptive Killers” because most deaths are indirectly related to the storm? Instead, people die in traffic accidents on icy roads and of hypothermia from prolonged exposure to cold.

Winter storms can range from a moderate snowfall over a few hours to a blizzard with blinding, wind-driven snow that lasts for several days. Some winter storms are large enough to affect several states, while others affect only a single community and can be accompanied by strong winds, icing, sleet and freezing rain.



“SNOWQUESTER” MARCH 2013

Familiarize yourself with the terms that are used to identify winter weather:

Freezing Rain: Rain that freezes when it hits the ground, creating a coating of ice on roads, walkways, trees and power lines.

Sleet: Rain that turns to ice pellets before reaching the ground. Sleet also causes moisture on roads to freeze and become slippery.

Winter Storm Outlook: Winter storm conditions are possible in the next 2 to 5 days.

Winter Weather Advisory: Winter weather conditions are expected to cause significant inconveniences and may be hazardous. When caution is used, these situations should not be life threatening.

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Winter Storm Watch: Winter storm conditions are possible within the next 36 to 48 hours. People in a watch area should review their winter storm plans and stay informed about weather conditions.

Winter Storm Warning: Life-threatening, severe winter conditions have begun or will begin within 24 hours. People in a warning area should take precautions immediately.

Blizzard Warning: Winter storms with sustained or frequent winds of 35 mph or higher, with considerable falling and/or blowing snow that frequently reduces visibility to ¼ of a mile or less. These conditions are expected to prevail for a minimum of 3 hours.

Blizzard: A blizzard means that the following conditions are expected to prevail for a period of 3 hours or longer:

- Sustained wind or frequent gusts of 35 mph or greater; and
- Considerable falling and/or blowing snow (i.e. reducing visibility to less than ¼ mile)

While you should stay home and off the roads during periods of inclement weather conditions, certain situations and events may not allow that to happen. Before you get on the road, get real time information on road conditions before you travel at www.511virginia.org or call 800-FOR-ROAD (800-367-7623) 24/7.

Virginia Department of Transportation also provides real time information on snow removal, on those roads in which they maintain. Check the current status at [Snow Plowing](#)

Be sure to download the [Ready Virginia Mobile App](#), [Maryland Prepares Mobile App](#) or the [American Red Cross First Aid App](#). Additionally, the Red Cross offers several other app's to assist you during other emergency events.

Here are some winter tips to follow or look for when you go out:

- **Drive only if it is absolutely necessary.** If you must drive: travel in the day; don't travel alone; keep others informed of your schedule; stay on main roads and avoid back road shortcuts.
 - [Winterize Your Vehicle & Update the Emergency Kit](#)
 - **Let someone know your destination,** your route, and when you expect to arrive. If your car gets stuck along the way, help can be sent along your predetermined route.
 - **Clear all the snow and ice from your vehicle's** hood, roof and even the windows and lights before driving. Keep your gas tank full.
- Listen to your radio, television or NOAA Weather Radio for weather reports and emergency information. [The Red Cross offers a great NOAA Radio.](#)
- Watch for signs of [frostbite](#) (skin appears white and waxy, numbness or no feeling) and [hypothermia](#) (shivering, confusion or dizziness, slow or slurred speech). Go to a medical facility immediately if you or someone you know is experiencing these symptoms.
- Dress for the weather. Wear several layers of loose fitting, lightweight; warm clothing rather than one layer of heavy clothing. Wear mittens, a hat and cover your mouth with a scarf to protect your lungs.
- Avoid overexertion when shoveling snow. Overexertion can bring on a heart attack—a major cause of death during the winter.
- Never use a generator, grill, camp stove or other gasoline, propane, natural gas or charcoal→ burning devices inside a home, garage, basement, crawlspace or any

partially enclosed area. Locate unit away from doors, windows and vents that could allow carbon monoxide to come indoors.

[Click here to learn more about winter storms and extreme cold](#)