



What to do before a winter weather event

Last-Minute Actions

Winter weather can be harsh; keep your family safe and your building prepared. When severe winter weather is forecast, take these last-minute actions.

STAY INFORMED & ACTIVATE PLAN

MONITOR THE WEATHER

- Find a reliable source for severe winter weather information. Follow the National Weather Service (NWS) Weather Prediction Center ([WPC](#)) on [Facebook](#) or [X](#), and your [local NWS office](#). Tune in to local news often when winter weather is forecast.
- Enable wireless emergency alerts on your cell phone. What to listen for:
 - Winter Storm, Winter Weather, Blizzard, Wind Chill
 - A **WATCH** means be prepared.
 - A **WARNING** means take action.
- Have a weather alert radio that broadcasts emergency alerts from the National Weather Service nearby.

ACTIVATE YOUR EMERGENCY WINTER PLAN

- Ensure emergency contacts have been added to your phone.
- Communicate with your family. Ensure they are familiar with the plan.
- Determine where to go in case your home gets too cold.
- Bring pets inside or provide adequate shelter and unfrozen water.
- Fill your car's gas tank or ensure it has a full charge.
- Have the emergency supply kit ready to live without power, water, or gas.
- Keep your phone charged.

PREPARE YOUR HOME

PREVENT PIPES FROM FREEZING

Indoors

- Set your thermostat to a minimum of 55°F (12.8°C).
- Open cabinet doors where piping is present, especially when pipes are next to an outside wall.
- Let all faucets drip during extreme cold weather.

Outdoors ([if you haven't already done so](#))

- Remove hoses attached to your home, drain them, and store them away.
- If you don't have frost-proof outdoor faucets, shut off the valves and insulate them. Note: Homes built before 2010 typically do not have frost-proof outdoor faucets.

TURN ON HEAT CABLES

- If you have an ice dam prevention system, turn it on before the snow begins to fall.

Ensure you have plenty of supplies, such as:

- Fuel for generators.
- Snow removal equipment such as shovels or a snow blower.
- De-icing products for walkways and parking lots.

Create a home inventory video

- Use your cell phone to video each room to show your belongings. Documenting your belongings is easier before a disaster happens.

What to do after a winter weather event

Recover

Necessary recovery actions from a winter storm can vary from snow removal to repairing damage to your home or property. Follow these steps after a winter storm, making sure to stay safe.

BEGIN REMOVING SNOW RIGHT AWAY

- Safety first! If it's warm enough and safe to go outside, fresh snow is easiest to clear. Shovel after each snowfall. Take breaks to avoid overexertion.
- Shovel or use a snowblower to clear the front steps, sidewalks, and driveway of snow and ice.
- Apply a de-icing product on walkways and stairs to prevent slips and falls.
- Clear snow from your home's furnace exhaust vent.
- Place non-slip mats in your front entryway to prevent slipping.

WATCH WINTERY ACCUMULATION AND CLEAN THE ROOF

- Monitor your roof's snow load to ensure it does not exceed maximum capacity and clear ice dams.
- Clear the snow from your home, shed, and garage. For safe removal that won't damage your roof, hire a snow removal contractor.

USE YOUR GENERATOR DURING POWER OUTAGES

Follow the manufacturer's recommendations for proper generator use.

Portable generator

- Portable generators should be operated outside in a well-ventilated area and away from windows. Use extreme caution when determining where to operate the generator.
- Portable generators should never be run unattended and while running, should be checked periodically.
- Portable generators should not be fueled while hot.

- Do not let snow accumulate on top of a portable generator.

Permanent generator

- Permanent generators are more self-sufficient than portable models but should also be monitored periodically while they are in operation.

ASSESS YOUR HOME AND DOCUMENT ANY DAMAGE

Inside

- Watch for signs of snow load damage, such as creaking sounds, a sagging roof, cracks in the ceiling or walls, water stains and doors or windows that no longer open and close correctly.
- Check for flowing water from faucets. If water isn't flowing and you suspect frozen pipes:
 - Shut off the water supply.
 - If you have power, open cabinet doors to let heat in to affected area.
 - Call a plumber to make repairs for any burst pipes.

Outside

- If a utility line is damaged or may become damaged, call the utility company. Stay away from any downed power lines.
- Assess downed trees or large limbs that may fall.
 - If the tree/limb is located on your driveway or yard, call a tree care professional.
 - If the tree/limb is located on a road or sidewalk, call your municipal public works department.

Document

- Create a list and take photos or videos to document any property losses.

CONTACT YOUR INSURER ASAP, IF YOUR HOME IS DAMAGED

- Contact your insurance agent as soon as possible. Have information ready to provide such as your name, contact info, policy number, type and date of loss, a description of the loss and your home inventory. You should be assigned a claim number, and an adjuster who will work with you.
- If you need to relocate, keep records and receipts for additional expenses. Most insurance policies cover emergency living arrangements such as a hotel or temporary housing.
- Keep receipts and documentation for any services rendered or purchases. Consider creating an electronic file for this information in a cloud storage account so you can access it from anywhere.
- Adjusters may tell homeowners to hire a professional cleaning service or purchase a tarp for your roof. Keep these receipts.

TAKE STEPS TO MITIGATE FURTHER DAMAGE

- Mitigate further damage by hiring a reputable roofer to place a tarp over your damaged roof and/or a restoration service for water removal before mold becomes an issue.
- If it's safe to do so and recommended by your adjuster, remove any salvageable belongings to a safe, dry space like a storage unit or a family member's home.