



NEWS from SEMO

NEW YORK STATE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT OFFICE
1220 Washington Avenue, Building 22, Suite 101, Albany, NY 12226-2251

David A. Paterson, Governor

John R. Gibb, Director

MEDIA ADVISORY

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FOR RELEASE:
IMMEDIATE, Sunday
December 14, 2008

ICE STORM SAFETY INFORMATION

The first major winter storm of the season has struck, resulting in a loss of electric power to tens of thousands of New Yorkers. The greatest concern is the safety of all during these challenging times.

The following is a series of single topic factsheets containing important safety tips that you can provide your readers/viewers throughout your storm coverage.

We strongly encourage you to print, broadcast and post to your websites this life-saving information. And thank you in advance for your assistance.

There are also two places on the Internet that people can visit for more winter weather-related safety tips: www.nyalert.gov or www.semo.state.ny.us.



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CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING

Carbon monoxide poisoning is a silent, deadly killer claiming about 1,000 lives each year in the United States. Such common items as automotive exhaust, home heating systems and obstructed chimneys can produce the colorless, odorless gas.

The gas can also be produced by poorly vented generators, kerosene heaters, gas grills and other items used for cooking and heating when used improperly during the winter months.

1. **NEVER** run generators indoors. Open a window slightly when using a kerosene heater.
2. **NEVER** use charcoal to cook indoors.
3. **NEVER** use a gas oven to heat your home.

Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning include sleepiness, headaches and dizziness.

If you suspect carbon monoxide poisoning, ventilate the area and get to a hospital.

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GENERATORS

Electric generators can provide you with piece of mind and convenience when you are faced with a temporary loss of electric service.

The New York State Emergency Management Office urges you to follow these safety guidelines when operating a generator:

1. **Run generators outside, downwind of structures. NEVER** run a generator indoors. Deadly carbon monoxide gas from the generator's exhaust can spread throughout enclosed spaces. Install a carbon monoxide detector.
2. Fuel spilled on a hot generator can cause an explosion. If your generator has a detachable fuel tank remove it before refilling. If this is not possible, shut off the generator and let it cool before refilling.
3. Do not exceed the rated capacity of your generator. Most of the small, home-use portable generators produce from 350 to 12,000 watts of power. Overloading your generator can damage it, the appliances connected to it, and may cause a fire. Follow the manufacturer's instructions.
4. Keep children away from generators at all times.

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DRIVING

The leading cause of death and injuries during winter storms is transportation accidents.

- Dark traffic signals should be treated as all-way stops.
- Keep vehicles clear of ice and snow. Good vision is a key to good driving.
- Plan your stops – keep more distance between cars.
- Be extra alert. Remember, snowdrifts can hide smaller children.
- Always match your speed to the road and weather conditions.

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HYPOTHERMIA

Prolonged exposure to cold temperatures can cause hypothermia, especially in children and the elderly.

Watch for these symptoms:

1. Inability to concentrate
2. Poor coordination
3. Slurred speech
4. Drowsiness
5. Exhaustion
6. Uncontrollable shivering, followed by a sudden lack of shivering

If the person's body temperature drops below 95 degrees Fahrenheit, get emergency medical assistance immediately!

Remove wet clothing, wrap the victim in warm blankets and give warm, non-alcoholic, non-caffeinated liquids until help arrives.

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FROSTBITE

People working or playing outdoors during the winter can develop frostbite and not even know it.

There is no pain associated with the early stages of frostbite, so learn to watch for these danger signs:

1. First, the skin may feel numb and become flushed. Then it turns white or grayish-yellow. Frostbitten skin feels cold to the touch.
2. If frostbite is suspected, move the victim to a warm area. Cover the affected area with something warm and dry. Never rub it!
3. Then get to a doctor or hospital as quickly as possible.

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CHAIN SAWS

If heavy ice has downed tree limbs, you may need to use a chain saw to clean up debris. Be especially careful around chain saws. Before using a chain saw to clear downed tree limbs, know how to safeguard against injury. Always operate, adjust, and maintain the saw according to manufacturer's instructions provided in the manual accompanying the chain saw.

- Properly sharpen chain saw blades and properly lubricate the blade with bar and chain oil. Additionally, the operator should periodically check and adjust the tension of the chain saw blade to ensure good cutting action.
- Choose the proper size of chain saw to match the job, and include safety features such as a chain brake, front and rear hand guards, stop switch, chain catcher and a spark arrester.
- Wear the appropriate protective equipment, including hard hat, safety glasses, hearing protection, heavy work gloves, cut-resistant leg-wear (chain saw chaps) that extend from the waist to the top of the foot, and boots which cover the ankle.
- Avoid contact with power lines. Assume they are live.
- Always cut at waist level or below to ensure that you maintain secure control over the chain saw.

Bystanders or co-workers should remain at least two tree lengths (at least 150 feet) away from anyone felling a tree and at least 30 feet from anyone operating a chain saw to remove limbs or cut a fallen tree.

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WHAT TO DO WITH FOOD DURING POWER OUTAGE

During a power outage, open your refrigerator and freezer as little as possible. Eat the most perishable items first, such as leftovers, meat, poultry and food containing milk, cream, sour cream, or soft cheese.

Despite your best efforts, the food in your freezer may partially or completely thaw before power is restored. Foods that have completely thawed, but are still cold and have been kept cold for no longer than one or two days after thawing, may be eaten or refrozen under certain conditions:

- Fruits may be eaten or refrozen if they still taste and smell good.
- Do not eat or refreeze vegetables that have thawed completely since bacteria multiply rapidly in them.
- Meat and poultry should be thrown away if their color or odor is poor or questionable, or if they have been held at a temperature warmer than 40 degrees Fahrenheit for more than two hours.
- Fish and shellfish should not be eaten or refrozen once they have thawed.

Remember the general rule: When in doubt, throw it out!

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PROTECTING WATER PIPES

To prevent the mess and aggravation of frozen water pipes, protect your home, apartment or business by following the simple steps below.

When It's Cold

1. Let hot and cold water trickle at night from a faucet on an outside wall.
2. Open cabinet doors to allow more heat to get to un-insulated pipes under a sink or appliance near an outer wall.
3. Make sure heat is left on and set no lower than 55 degrees.
4. If you plan to be away: (1) Have someone check your house daily to make sure the heat is still on to prevent freezing, or (2) drain and shut off the water system (except indoor sprinkler systems).

If Pipes Freeze

1. Make sure you and your family knows how to shut off the water, in case pipes burst. Stopping the water flow minimize the damage to your home. Call a plumber and contact your insurance agent.
2. Never try to thaw a pipe with an open flame or torch.
3. Always be careful of the potential for electric shock in and around standing water.

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WHEN THE LIGHTS GO OUT

If you lose electrical service, follow these tips:

1. Call your utility first to determine area repair schedules. Turn off or unplug lights and appliances to prevent a circuit overload when service is restored. Leave one light on to indicate power has been restored.
2. To help prevent freezing pipes, turn on faucets slightly. Running water will not freeze as quickly.
3. Protect yourself from carbon monoxide poisoning:
 - o **DO NOT** operate generators indoors; the motor emits deadly carbon monoxide gas.
 - o **DO NOT** use charcoal to cook indoors. It, too, can cause a buildup of carbon monoxide gas.
 - o **DO NOT** use your gas oven to heat your home -- prolonged use of an open oven in a closed house can create carbon monoxide gas.
 - o Make sure fuel space heaters are used with proper ventilation.
4. Keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible to help reduce food spoilage.

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ALTERNATIVE HEAT SOURCES

Use wood-burning stoves, fireplaces and heaters safely. Follow these tips:

1. Always keep a screen around an open flame.
2. Never use gasoline to start your fireplace.
3. Never burn charcoal indoors.
4. Do not close the damper when ashes are hot.
5. When using alternative heat sources such as a fireplace, woodstove, etc. always make sure you have proper ventilation. Keep curtains, towels and potholders away from hot surfaces.
6. Have a fire extinguisher and smoke detectors ... and make sure they work!
Establish a well-planned escape route with the entire family.

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KEROSENE HEATERS

If you use kerosene heaters to supplement your regular heating fuel, or as an emergency source of heat, follow these safety tips:

1. Follow the manufacturer's instructions.
2. The Uniform Fire Prevention & Building Code of New York State prohibits kerosene heaters from being used in sleeping rooms, bathrooms or storage closets.
3. Use only the correct fuel for your unit.
4. Refuel outdoors **ONLY** and only when the unit is cool.
5. Keep the heater at least three feet away from furniture and other flammable objects.
6. When using the heater, use fire safeguards and ventilate properly.

Remember, the fire hazard is greatly increased in the winter because alternate heating sources often are used without following proper safety precautions.

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PROTECTING PETS

Pay close attention to the safety of our pets. Here are some safety tips to follow from the New York State Emergency Management Office:

1. Ingesting anti-freeze can be fatal for your dog or cat. It has a sweet taste and even a tiny amount can cause severe kidney damage and even death. If you spill some, soak it up immediately. (Clay kitty litter works well. Discard the litter once the anti-freeze has been absorbed.)
2. Pets that live outdoors should be fed a bit more in the winter because they need the extra calories to stay warm. They also should have fresh water put out a couple of times a day, or consider a special bowl that prevents the water from freezing.
3. If your pet goes outdoors, be aware of the temperature. Pets can get frostbite very easily on the ears, tail and paws.
4. When walking your dog, check the paws to make sure that ice is not building up between the toes and that salt from the roads is not irritating the skin.
5. If your dog is a swimmer, keep it on a leash around open water or unstable ice. Hypothermia can set in quickly and the dog may be unable to get out of the water.
6. Before you start your car, you should honk the horn to make sure that a cat has not decided to nap in a warm spot under the hood of the vehicle.
7. If decorating for the holidays, keep ornaments out of the reach of your pets. Remember that poinsettias, holly, mistletoe and other plants can be toxic if ingested.

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