

Preparing for Winter Weather

While we are well into the winter season, it's never too late to make winter preparations. What follows are 7 suggestions from Environment Canada, as well as suggested contents for your car's emergency kit.

1. Don't wait for storm warnings to prepare for poor weather. Begin your preparations early in the season so that you're ready to react quickly when a winter storm is forecast. Assemble and check your existing emergency kits. Get in the habit of factoring the weather into your daily plans, and be ready to cancel or reschedule plans.
2. Listen to weather forecasts and warnings, and pay close attention to changing weather conditions. Check radio and television broadcasts, recorded phone messages, and websites.
3. Travel safely. Give your car a winter tune-up, and have your snow tires installed early to avoid being caught off guard. If it's time to replace your snow tires, buy them early to ensure availability. Assemble a car emergency kit. See below for suggested contents. Listen to weather forecasts early in the day to assess the potential for severe weather in your area, or along your travel route. Check provincial road reports before setting out.
4. Assemble a home emergency kit. Have a dedicated supply of bottled water and non-perishable or canned foods on hand in case you are unable to get to a store for a few days. Ensure you have a battery or crank-powered radio, flashlights, new batteries and propane to fuel a propane camping stove and/or barbecue for cooking and heating water. If your water supply depends on electricity, set up an alternative water source (e.g., a rain barrel) or ensure you have a way to melt snow for non-drinking water needs. Do not use propane stoves and barbecues indoors, and avoid using candles if at all possible as they can be extremely dangerous, particularly if you have children or pets.
5. Work and play safe. Winter storms and severe conditions such as high wind chill values can be hazardous to you, your employees, children, or even pets. When working or playing outside, beware of worsening conditions around you. If conditions worsen, go indoors as soon as possible. If you must be outside during inclement weather, dress appropriately. Wear a hat and dress in thin layers of loose-fitting clothing with water-repellent and wind-resistant outer layers. Watch carefully for symptoms signaling hypothermia: shivering, confusion and loss of muscular control. Frostbite can occur in minutes. Watch for numbness or whiteness in ears, nose, fingers, and toes.
6. Respect the potentially destructive power of the weather. When severe weather is forecast for your area, make preparations quickly, securing any outdoor property. Take cover inside and stay there until the storm has subsided and the danger has passed. Don't travel unless it's absolutely necessary, and respect evacuation orders that local emergency responders may issue.
7. Remember that after-storm conditions can pose hazards too. Weather phenomena such as storm surges can wreak lasting havoc on infrastructure, leaving it vulnerable after a storm. Road conditions may remain hazardous too even after the storm has subsided. Take care as you resume normal activities.

An emergency kit for your car

Keep the following supplies in the trunk of your vehicle at all times. And keep the gas tank at least half full all the time.

Communication aids

- cell phone and portable charger
- emergency phone numbers
- change for a public pay phone

- loud whistle

Emergency supplies and personal protective equipment

- extra antifreeze, windshield washer fluid
- flashlight with batteries
- work gloves and coveralls
- foil emergency blanket
- candle, waterproof matches, and a deep can
- fluorescent vest
- warm clothing, boots, and water-proof jacket
- seatbelt cutter (easily accessible, such as the glove compartment)
- shovel
- emergency triangle, warning light, or road flares
- fire extinguisher
- first aid kit
- "Call Police" sign, SOS bag, banner, or fluorescent bag
- non-perishable food items, drinking water, paper towels

Tools

- suitable container or carrying case for easy storage and accessibility of kit contents
- scraper and snowbrush
- spare tire, jack, and tools
- tow rope and jumper cables
- roadmaps and compass
- sand, salt, or cat litter (for traction)
- multi tool/utility knife
- tire pump/inflator
- small hammer to break a window