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Dane County Emergency Management: Winter storm warning safety tips

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While the snow fall was limited and continues to fall slowly, we are concerned with the extreme cold and wind that will follow.

Temperatures are expected to drop and go well below zero the next 72 hours. The combination of drifting snow and low temperatures makes traveling risky. Heavy winds are expected throughout the next two days, it does not take a large amount of snow to create drifting concerns and drastic changes in road conditions.

SLOW DOWN and DO NOT pass snow plows! Passing snow plows places both the snow plow operators and other drivers at risk.

The drifting snow can also pose hazards to homes. Blocked furnace and hot water heater vents can cause dangerous levels of carbon monoxide to build up in the home. Make sure that all furnace and hot water heater vents around the house are clear of snow.

To protect yourself and your family during extreme cold, follow these safety tips:

For Yourself and Loved Ones

- **Stay inside.** When possible, stay indoors.
- **Limit outdoor time for pets**. Extreme cold is dangerous for animals too.
- **Dress in layers.** If you have to go out, dress in several loose-fitting layers. Wear a hat, mittens, and snow boots. Use a scarf to cover your mouth and face.

- **Know the signs and symptoms of frostbite and hypothermia.**
  - Hypothermia: Warning signs include shivering, exhaustion, confusion, and slurred speech, and symptoms can look similar to intoxication. Call 911 if someone is exposed to cold temperatures and you see these symptoms.
  - Frostbite: **At the first signs of redness or pain in any skin area, get out of the cold or protect any exposed skin—frostbite may be beginning.**
- **Check on your friends, family, and neighbors**. Give loved ones a call or text to make sure they're warm and safe. People most likely to be hurt from the cold are older adults, babies, people who spend lots of time outside (e.g., the homeless, hunters), and people who drink alcohol or use drugs.

For Your Home

- **Stock a home emergency kit.** Your home kit should include items such as food and water, cell phone and charger, flashlight and batteries, first aid kit, important medications, a weather radio, and a change of clothes. Visit readywisconsin.wi.gov/make-a-kit for more items and tips.
- **Prevent frozen pipes.** The Red Cross has tips for preventing and thawing frozen pipes.
- **Make sure you have working carbon monoxide detectors.** All homes and duplexes in Wisconsin are required to have properly working detectors on every level, including the basement, but not the attic or storage areas. Detectors can be purchased at most hardware stores or online for $20-50.
- **Never run a gasoline or propane heater or a grill (gas or charcoal) inside your home or garage.** Any heating system that burns fuel produces carbon monoxide. Use a battery-powered detector where you have fuel burning devices but no electric outlets, such as in tents, cabins, and RVs.
- **Run generators at a safe distance (at least 20 feet) from the home**. Never run a generator in the home or garage, or right next to windows or doors.

For Your Car

Winterize your car. Just as you have a home emergency kit, you need one for your car too. Pack items such as blankets, snacks and water, a shovel, jumper cables, and sand. Visit readywisconsin.wi.gov/make-a-kit for more items and tips. Keep your gas tank at least half-full.

Click here for the latest forecast information from the National Weather Service.