

Winter Weather Information

From Homeland Security and the Spring Lake Park-Blaine-Mounds View Fire Department

Facts

- Winter storms can be accompanied by strong winds, creating blizzard conditions with blinding, wind-driven snow, severe drifting and dangerous wind chill. These strong winds can knock down trees, utility poles and power lines.
- Winter storms can be accompanied by heavy snow that can immobilize a region and paralyze a city, stranding commuters, stopping the flow of supplies, and disrupting emergency and medical services. Accumulations of snow can collapse buildings and knock down trees and power lines. In rural areas, homes and farms may be isolated for days. The aftermath of a winter storm can impact a region for days, weeks and even months.
- Winter storms can be accompanied by heavy accumulations of ice that can bring down trees, electrical wires and telephone poles. Communications and power can be lost for days. Even small accumulations of ice can cause extreme hazards to motorists and pedestrians.
- Extreme cold often accompanies a winter storm or is left in its wake. Prolonged exposure to the cold can cause frostbite or hypothermia and become life-threatening.
- **Advisories** are issued by the NWS when conditions warrant increased public awareness, but the weather is not severe enough to merit a warning.
- The National Weather Service (NWS) issues a **winter storm watch** when severe winter conditions, such as heavy snow and/or ice, are possible within the next 12 to 48 hours.
- The NWS issues a **winter storm warning** when severe winter weather conditions are occurring or expected to occur within a few hours.
- A **blizzard warning** is issued when considerable falling and/or blowing snow, frequent visibility of less than one-quarter mile and frequent wind speeds of at least 35 mph are expected.
- A **ground-blizzard warning** is issued when visibilities are reduced to less than one-quarter mile due to existing snow cover being blown about. The sky might be clear, but strong winds cause near-zero visibility in blowing snow.
- **Wind chill** is the cooling effect on exposed skin produced by the combination of temperature and wind.

Before a Winter Storm Strikes

- [Know the difference](#) between a winter storm watch and a winter storm warning.
- Keep ahead of [winter storms](#) by listening for the latest weather statements, watches and warnings. You can maintain a direct link to the NWS by purchasing a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration ([NOAA](#)) [weather radio](#).
- Familiarize yourself with the [new wind chill index](#).
- Keep your car "winterized" with fresh antifreeze and a strong battery. Use snow tires.
- Keep a winter survival kit in your car. (Information on survival kits is on this site.)
- "Winterize" your home by installing storm windows, adequate insulation and caulking, and by weather-stripping doors and windows.
- Stock extra batteries for radios and flashlights.
- Consider a safe alternate heat source and a supply of fuel.

During a Winter Storm

- Listen to NOAA weather radio, local radio or television for the latest weather reports and emergency information.
- If you plan to be outside, dress in layered clothing and avoid over-exertion.
- Wear a hat; most body heat is lost through the top of the head.
- If your vehicle becomes stranded, stay with it until help arrives. Do not try to walk for help during a blizzard.