



# Indoor Safety during Winter Storms

## Safely Use Alternative Sources of Heat

Alternative sources of heating produce major risks including fires and carbon monoxide poisoning. When using alternative sources of heat like fireplaces, wood stoves, and space heaters, take the following precautions.

- Never use electric generators, grills, or other gasoline, propane, natural gas, or charcoal -burning devices indoors, as this may cause carbon monoxide poisoning.
- Install a battery-operated carbon monoxide detector and a smoke detector. You can get both at hardware stores for about \$20.
- Ensure adequate ventilation for a heat source by cracking windows.
- Do not plug space heaters into extension cords.
- Do not put a space heater on anything that could catch fire. Place it on a noncombustible surface.
- Only use the designated fuel for your heat source.

## Know the Signs and Symptoms of Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

- Carbon monoxide poisoning occurs when the body is in contact with carbon monoxide, an odorless, colorless gas that is given off by fuel-burning equipment.
- Signs of carbon monoxide poisoning include shortness of breath, headache, impaired coordination, nausea, dizziness, and loss of consciousness.
- If you suspect a carbon monoxide leak in your house or if your carbon monoxide alarm goes off, leave the house immediately and call 911.

## Know What to Do When There is No Heat

- Seek alternative shelter by texting SHELTER and your zip code to 43362.
- Conserve body heat by not overexerting yourself.
- Eat well-balanced meals and avoid alcohol or caffeinated beverages.
- Dress warmly using hats, mittens, and scarves.
- Close off unused rooms and prevent airflow by positioning towels under doors.

## Prevent Frozen Pipes

Extremely cold temperatures can damage and freeze pipes. Vulnerable pipes include those found on exterior walls, in unheated rooms, and outside supply lines.

- If possible, insulate water lines before winter begins.
- Keep an emergency water supply that will last for several days.
- Keep the temperature in your home constant, night and day.
- If you leave for vacation, keep your heat at a minimum of 55°F.

- Do not turn faucets completely off; let faucets drip continuously.
- Open cabinet doors and inside doors so that pipes are in contact with warm air.
- If pipes are frozen, completely open all faucets.
- Thaw frozen pipes with a hairdryer or by pouring hot water on the pipes. Do not thaw pipes with open flames.
- If a pipe bursts, close your main water valve immediately.

## POWER OUTAGES

### Keep Food as Safe as Possible

- Keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible. Eat perishable foods from the refrigerator first.
- Use freezer food after refrigerator food.
- Use your non-perishable foods after using food from the refrigerator and freezer.
- If it looks like the power outage will last more than a day, prepare a cooler with ice for your freezer items.
- Keep food in a dry, cool spot and keep it covered at all times.

### Monitor Electrical Equipment

- Turn off and unplug all unnecessary electrical equipment.
- Turn off or disconnect any appliances, equipment, or electronics you were using when the power went out. When the power comes back on, surges or spikes can damage equipment.
- Leave one light on so you'll know when the power comes back on.
- Eliminate unnecessary travel, especially by car. Travel lights will be out and roads will be congested.

### Use Generators Safely

- Keep the generator outside, at least 20 feet from windows, people, or homes.
- When using a portable generator, connect the equipment you want to power directly to the outlets on the generator. Do not connect a portable generator to a home's electrical system.
- If you are considering getting a generator, get advice from a professional, such as an electrician. Make sure that the generator you purchase is rated for the power you think you need.
- Never use a generator, grill, camp stove, or other gas or fuel-powered device inside a home, garage, basement, crawlspace, or partially enclosed area.
- Install carbon monoxide alarms in central locations in your home.
- If the carbon monoxide alarm sounds, move to fresh air and call 911.



**Wisconsin Department of Health Services**

Division of Public Health

Climate and Health Program

P-00652d (Rev. 02/2019)