



# WINTER WEATHER PREPAREDNESS GUIDE



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PREPARED BY THE OFFICE OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT



# INTRODUCTION

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Winter season in San Antonio, from December to February, is typically mild, but there are days when the temperature drops below freezing. Sometimes very cold waves last for a few days. A winter storm can bring extreme cold, freezing rain, ice, snow, high winds, or a combination of all these conditions.

This guide is intended to help you prepare yourself and your loved ones before, during, and after a winter storm. The recommendations and tips are a combination of several resources available to the public from Ready South Texas, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and the Centers for Control Disease and Prevention (CDC).

During extremely cold weather or winter storms, staying warm and safe can be a challenge. Winter storms can bring power failures, loss of communication services, and icy roads. To keep yourself and your loved ones safe, you should know how to prepare your home and your car before a winter storm hits.

Please take a few minutes to review this emergency preparedness guide and share this information with your family, friends, and neighbors. Furthermore, visit the helpful links listed in this guide to find useful tips, information, and programs and services available.

## EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS



**MAKE A PLAN**



**BUILD A KIT**



**BE INFORMED**

# HOW TO PREPARE FOR A WINTER STORM

Winter storms can make traveling across the city extremely dangerous, cause electrical and water outages, and negatively impact critical community services such as public transportation, childcare, and city services. Be prepared this winter.

Now/Prepare	During/Survive	After/Be Safe
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare an emergency kit and stock emergency supplies</li> <li>• Make a family communication plan</li> <li>• Sign up for local alerts and warnings</li> <li>• Monitor local news</li> <li>• Install battery-powered carbon monoxide detectors and smoke detectors</li> <li>• Wrap pipes that run outside or under a house in pipe insulation or rags to avoid cracks due to water freezing in them</li> <li>• Review your property insurance, and safeguard critical documents</li> <li>• Get trained on specific needs your family may have</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stay Indoors and off the roads</li> <li>• Dress in layers and use blankets to stay warm</li> <li>• Bring pets into a warm place and out of the storm or severe cold</li> <li>• Walk carefully on snowy, icy, walkways.</li> <li>• Cover or bring in plants inside to avoid frost damage.</li> <li>• Never heat a home with a cooktop or oven, charcoal grill, or gasoline or propane heater indoors, as these items cause electric shock, and/or cause deadly carbon monoxide poisoning.</li> <li>• Monitor local news</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Only drive if necessary</li> <li>• Dress in warm clothing, and stay dry to prevent prolonged exposure to cold and wind</li> <li>• Monitor local news</li> </ul>

## PEOPLE



Keep warm, and dress in layers. Check on your elderly family or neighbors.

## PETS



Bring pets inside to keep them safe and healthy.

## PLANTS



Bring potted plants inside. For outdoor plants, water and cover them with a cloth fabric.

## PIPES



Cover pipes and allow outdoor faucets to slowly drip to prevent them from freezing.

# WATCHES, WARNING, AND ADVISORIES

Learn the differences between Advisories, Watches, and Warnings, which describe changing winter weather conditions. By learning these terms you will be prepared to understand how an approaching storm may impact you and what actions to take to stay safe.

Winter weather related Advisories, Watches, and Warnings are issued by your local National Weather Service office and are based upon local criteria.

**Winter Weather Advisories** are issued when snow, blowing snow, ice, sleet, or a combination of these wintry elements is expected but conditions should not be hazardous enough to meet Warning criteria. Be prepared for winter driving conditions and possible travel difficulties. Use caution when driving.

**Winter Storm Watches** are issued when conditions are favorable for a significant winter storm event. Heavy sleet, heavy snow, ice storms, blowing snow, or a combination of these events are possible.

**Winter Storm Warnings** are issued for a significant winter weather event including snow, ice, sleet, blowing snow, or a combination of these hazards. Travel will become difficult or impossible in some situations. Delay your travel plans until conditions improve.



## Winter Storms

Stay ahead of this storm by following the watches and warnings issued by the National Weather Service.



weather.gov

# EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS



## Emergency Alert System

The Emergency Alert System (EAS) is an alert tool that can rapidly disseminate emergency information to the general public and can be initiated by local, state and federal officials. A national EAS alert may be activated during a national crisis by the President of the United States. A local EAS alert may be activated in response to local events such as severe weather, floods, industrial accidents, civil disorders, or any event that poses a danger to life or property.



The Amber Alert is part of the EAS system and is initiated by law enforcement. The EAS utilizes radio and television broadcasters to relay emergency information to residents. These messages interrupt programming on local television and radio stations and provide viewers and listeners with warnings and instructions on how to react in the event of an emergency.

## Emergency Notification System

The Emergency Notification System (ENS) is another mass notification service available to emergency management officials. During an emergency or disaster, it enables local authorities to contact affected individuals in a specific area within minutes via landlines, cell phone, text, and e-mail. An ENS message is delivered, providing warning and instructions for residents. There are currently three counties participating in this program, Bexar, Guadalupe, and Comal. For more information and to register for this service please visit: [www.alertsa.com](http://www.alertsa.com)

## Accessible Hazard Alert System (AHAS)

Provides accessible alert messages to registered residents who are deaf, blind, hard of hearing, or deaf/blind before, during, and after an emergency or disaster in the City of San Antonio. AHAS subscribers will be able to receive an accessible alert messages in American Sign Language (ASL) and English voice and text. Messages can be sent to internet and video capable computers, cell phones, smart phones, tablets, laptops, and wireless braille readers.

For more information and to register please visit: [sat.ahasalerts.com/register.asp](http://sat.ahasalerts.com/register.asp) or call 3-1-1



# NOW/PREPARE

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## Prepare an Emergency Kit and Stock Emergency Supplies

Ask yourself, “What would I need for myself and my family if a winter storm struck?” and “What would I or my family require if we did not have access to a grocery store or pharmacy for at least three days?” Add any of these specific items to your Winter Storm Preparedness Checklist.

Gather, in advance, the necessary supplies and items you will need to stay safe during and after the winter storm passes. Make sure you have everything you will need to get in touch with your family either through cellular phones or email.

### Recommended Supplies for a Basic Kit:

- Water, one gallon of water per person per day, for drinking and sanitation
- Food, at least a three-day supply of non-perishable items
- Manual Can opener (if kit contains canned food)
- Flashlight and extra batteries
- Battery-powered or hand crank radio
- Extra batteries and portable charger
- First aid kit
- Whistle to signal for help
- Wrench or pliers to turn off utilities
- Prescription Medications and Eyeglasses
- Plastic sheeting and duct tape to shelter-in-place
- Infant formula and diapers (if needed)
- Garbage bags and plastic ties for personal sanitation
- Mess kits, cups, plates and plastic utensils

### Additional items to consider for your supply kit:

- Important family documents in a portable waterproof container and/or USB flash drive
- Cash
- Personal hygiene items and hand sanitizer
- Masks (for everyone ages 2 and above)
- Paper and pencil
- Books, games, puzzles or other activities
- Pet food, water and supplies for your pet
- Complete change of clothing including a long-sleeved shirt, long pants and sturdy shoes
- Disinfectant, household bleach

### Don't forget to plan for:

- Kids
- Elderly
- Pets
- Specialized Medical Equipment

# FUNCTIONAL NEEDS ITEMS

Infants, the elderly, and persons with disabilities may need more planning to be prepared for an emergency. You should consider:

## For Babies:

- Formula     Medications
- Bottles     Powdered Milk
- Diapers     Moist Towelettes
- Diaper Rash Ointment

## For Adults:

Ask your doctor about storing prescription medications such as heart and high blood pressure medication, insulin and other prescription drugs.

- Denture needs
- Extra eye glasses
- Contact lenses and supplies

## For Elderly and/or People with Disabilities:

- Plan how you will contact your family members by calling, or emailing, or texting agreed upon friends or relatives if you are unable to contact each other directly.
- Let people in your support network know of your emergency plans. Tell them where you keep your emergency supplies. They may be able to assist you in ensuring that your assistive devices will go with you if you have to evacuate your home.
- Extra batteries and a spare charger for hearing aids and/or personal assistive listening device. Keep records of where you got your hearing aids and exact types of batteries.
- Many new cell phones and smart phones have an alerting capability that includes specific sounds and vibrations that can be set to signal users of an emergency.
- Write an explanation of your needs in advance. If you need an assistive device or an interpreter, write it down. For example: "I use American Sign Language, I have a hearing loss and I need an interpreter, I need my (name of device)."
- Mark emergency supplies with Braille labels. Keep a list of your emergency supplies on a portable flash drive or make an audio file that is kept in a safe place where you can access it.
- Have an extra mobility cane, if used.
- Consider carrying a laminated personal communication board, if you might need assistance being understood. This could be one or several 3"x 5" cards containing written messages.
- If possible, stock extra over the counter and prescription medicine, oxygen, insulin, catheters, or other medical supplies you use.
- Make copies of medical prescriptions, doctor's orders and the style and serial numbers of the support devices you use.
- For more information or to watch a preparedness videos, visit: [www.ready.gov/disability](http://www.ready.gov/disability)



# CREATE YOUR FAMILY EMERGENCY COMMUNICATION PLAN

Before a storm hits, it is important to know how you will contact your family and how you will get back together. Remember, you might not always have access to your cellular phone.

Keep important numbers written down in your wallet in case you cannot access the contact list in your phone. Landline and cellular phone systems are often overwhelmed following a disaster, so you may need to use text messages and social media. Designate an out-of-town contact who can help your household reconnect. Be sure to practice your plan with your family.

<b>Who will contact you in an Emergency?</b>	<b>Is it Mommy?</b>	<b>Or Maybe Daddy?</b>
<b>Uncle Joe?</b>	<b>Granny Rosa?</b>	<b>WINGING IT IS NOT A PLAN</b>



## Make a Family Emergency Plan

Everyone in your household should know the following:

- Who to text or call
- Where to meet
- Where is your emergency kit

visit: [www.ready.gov/plan](http://www.ready.gov/plan) for more information.

# WINTER STORMS ARE DANGEROUS

The majority of deaths caused by winter storms are from vehicle accidents due to ice and snow. Heart attacks brought on by over-exertion from shoveling or clearing snow also increase during and after storms. Finally, individuals also suffer dangerous injuries (e.g., frostbite and hypothermia) because of exposure and lack of protection from the wind and cold. Another significant danger is sickness or death from carbon monoxide poisoning. Carbon monoxide poisoning can occur when using portable generators indoors, in attached garages, too close to the house, or when starting a vehicle without clearing snow and ice from the tailpipe. Generators should be used only outdoors and should be located at least 20 feet away from doors, windows, and vents.

## Understanding Wind Chill

As the wind increases, your body is cooled at a faster rate, causing the skin temperature to drop. This is why it sometimes “feels” colder than the actual temperature. Wind chill is the temperature it “feels like” when you are outside. The NWS provides a Wind Chill Chart to show the difference between air temperature, and the perceived temperature, and the amount of time until frostbite occurs.

## Cold Weather Dangers

If you detect symptoms of frostbite, which is the freezing of the skin and body tissue beneath the skin, in either yourself or another person, seek medical care IMMEDIATELY. Additionally, hypothermia occurs when one’s body temperature drops to dangerously low levels. Before addressing symptoms of frostbite, first determine whether you or someone else is showing signs of hypothermia.

Signs of Hypothermia	What to do
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Uncontrollable shivering</li><li>• Memory loss, disorientation</li><li>• Incoherence, slurred speech</li><li>• Drowsiness</li><li>• Apparent exhaustion</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Get the victim to a warm location.</li><li>• Remove wet clothing.</li><li>• Warm the center of the body first by wrapping the person in blankets or putting on dry clothing.</li><li>• Give warm, non-alcoholic beverages if the person is conscious.</li><li>• Take the person’s temperature. If it their temperature is below 95°, seek medical attention immediately.</li></ul>

Signs of Frostbite	What to do
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Loss of feeling and white or pale appearance in extremities, such as fingers, toes, earlobes, face, and the tip of the nose.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cover exposed skin, but do not rub the affected area in an attempt to warm it up.</li><li>• Frostbite results in the formation of ice crystals in the tissue, and rubbing could damage the tissue. Seek medical help immediately.</li><li>• For more information, visit the CDC’s page on frostbite and hypothermia.</li></ul>

# WINTERIZE YOUR HOME AND VEHICLE

## Winterize/Prepare Your Home



- Insulate walls and attics.
- Cover cracks around doors with rugs, newspapers, towels or other such material.
- Caulk and weatherize doors and windows.
- Locate and insulate the pipes most susceptible to freezing; typically those near outer walls, in crawl spaces or in attics.
- Seal any leaks that allow cold air inside where pipes are located.
- Disconnect garden hoses and shut off and drain water from pipes leading to outside faucets.
- If you have no heat, close off unneeded rooms and place towels or rugs under the doors.
- Make sure you know how to shut off the water in case pipes burst. If your water pipes freeze:
  - Shut off water at the main source. This can minimize the damage to your home.
  - Call a plumber and contact your insurance agent.
  - Never try to thaw a frozen pipe with an open flame or torch.
  - Always be aware of the potential for electric shock in and around standing water

### Prepare for Possible Isolation in Your Home for Several Days

- Have emergency heating equipment (fireplaces, wood burning stoves or space heaters) and ample fuel so you can keep at least one room of your house warm. Always ensure proper ventilation to avoid carbon monoxide poisoning.
- NEVER use an outdoor grill to heat your home or to cook food indoors.
- Keep fire extinguishers on hand and make sure your family knows how to use them.

### Vehicle

- Keep your gas tank full in case of evacuation, electrical, or water outages. A full tank will also keep the fuel line from freezing.
- Check your wipers, tires, lights and fluid levels regularly.
- Make sure the brakes and transmission are working properly.
- Lubricate door and trunk locks to prevent them from freezing.
- Prepare a Winter Storm Kit and carry it in your vehicle.

# DURING/SURVIVE

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**During Winter Storms and Extreme Cold stay indoors in a heated room as much as possible**

## **Electrical and Water Outages:**

- Unplug sensitive equipment during a power outage, including televisions, computers, and other electronics which helps protect against any voltage irregularities that may occur as power is restored.
- When a boil water notice is issued and you need to use tap water, you must boil the water before drinking it, making drinks, preparing food, brushing your teeth or making ice.
- If you have no water service to your house you can flush your toilet by using not-so-fresh water from a pool, a bathtub, or even melted snow.

## **What to Wear**

- Stay warm by dressing in layers of loose-fitting clothing instead of a single heavy layer.
- Wear a hat, even indoors. Keeping your head warm helps keep your body warm.
- Wear gloves or mittens to keep hands warm and wear a scarf to keep your neck warm.
- Use towels to block drafts around doors and windows.

## **If You Must go Outside**

- Wear several layers of loose-fitting, lightweight, warm clothing rather than one layer of heavy clothing. The outer garments should be tightly woven and water-repellent.
- Avoid overexertion, such as shoveling heavy snow, pushing a car or walking in deep snow. The strain from the cold and the hard labor of snow shoveling could cause a heart attack at any age; a major cause of death in the winter. Don't ignore chest pain or tightness in your chest.
- If you become stranded outdoors seek shelter to stay dry. Cover all exposed parts of the body.
- Do not eat snow as it will lower your body temperature. Melt it first.

## **Stay off the Road—Essential Travel Only**

Federal Highway Administration reports indicate that the risk of vehicular accidents rises sharply in winter weather conditions. Driving is very dangerous during and immediately after a winter storm. Plan to stay off the road when authorities issue Advisories, Watches, and Warnings.

If driving is necessary, ensure you have emergency supplies of food, water, warm clothing, and a full tank of gas in case you are stuck in traffic or have an accident and have to wait several hours for assistance. If possible, travel during the day and do not travel alone. Stay on main roads and do not crowd the snowplows. Let someone know your destination, route, and expected arrival time.

# AFTER/BE SAFE

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## After a Winter Storm

**After a winter storm, the road to recovery can be challenging. It may take several weeks for clean-up and rebuilding.**

- If your home is damaged, no longer safe, and/or has lost power, you may want to go to a designated public shelter. Call 311 for information on how you can get assistance. Follow local media for information on shelters.
- Text **SHELTER + your ZIP code** (e.g., SHELTER 20472) to **43362** (FEMA) to find the nearest shelter in your area. You can also find a shelter near you by checking out the FEMA mobile app: [fema.gov/mobile-app](https://fema.gov/mobile-app).
- Friends, family, and neighbors will likely be the first to provide help. Plan with neighbors now to help each other and share resources.
- Nonprofit and faith-based organizations often provide support immediately after a winter storm. If you or someone in your household has a disability, an access or functional need, and receives disability services, contact your local disability service provider for assistance.
- Insurance is an essential part of recovery. If you have insurance, you may receive financial compensation for some of your losses. Take pictures to document your damage and file a claim as soon as possible. Do what you can to prevent further damage (e.g., putting a tarp on a damaged roof) because insurance may not cover damage that occurs after the winter storm.
- The Federal Government provides assistance only when the President declares an area to be a federal disaster. FEMA may provide financial assistance for basic needs that cannot be met by other sources. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the U.S. Small Business Administration, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture may also provide disaster assistance. Insurance claims and other forms of assistance may take time to arrive, and, if you are missing key documents, additional delays are possible.
- Call 311 to find out if San Antonio has been declared an area to be a federal disaster after a winter storm.

### Learn from every storm

- Restock your emergency supplies to be ready in case another storm hits. Assess how well your supplies and family plan worked.
- What could you have done better? Take a few minutes to improve your family plan and supplies before the next winter storm hits.
- Talk to your neighbors and colleagues about their experiences and share tips with each other.



# RESOURCES

The following resources and websites can help you further prepare for, respond to, and recover from a winter storm

<b>For City of San Antonio Services</b>	Dial <b>3-1-1</b> or visit <a href="http://311.sanantonio.gov/">311.sanantonio.gov/</a>
<b>For Water Outages</b>	Call <b>SAWS</b> at <b>210-704-7297</b> or visit <a href="http://www.saws.org/water-outage-map">www.saws.org/water-outage-map</a>
<b>For Power Outages</b>	Call <b>CPS</b> at <b>210-353-2222</b> Visit <a href="http://www.cpsenergy.com">www.cpsenergy.com</a> to view a map of current outages or to report an outage or Visit <a href="http://www.cpsenergy.com/en/about-us/winter-preparedness.html">www.cpsenergy.com/en/about-us/winter-preparedness.html</a>
<b>For Street Closures</b>	Visit <a href="http://gis.sanantonio.gov/PWD/StreetClosures/">gis.sanantonio.gov/PWD/StreetClosures/</a> for street closures in the city  Visit <a href="http://www.bexarflood.org">www.bexarflood.org</a> for street closures in the City and County due to water over roadway
<b>For Traffic Conditions</b>	Visit <a href="http://its.txdot.gov/its/District/SAT">its.txdot.gov/its/District/SAT</a>
<b>For Information on City of San Antonio Emergency Preparedness</b>	Visit <a href="http://www.saoemprepare.com">www.saoemprepare.com</a>
<b>For Bexar County Emergency Management</b>	Visit <a href="http://www.bexar.org/672/Emergency-Management">www.bexar.org/672/Emergency-Management</a>
<b>For Weather Conditions</b>	Visit <a href="http://www.weather.gov/SanAntonio">www.weather.gov/SanAntonio</a>
<b>For Community Resources</b>	Call <b>211</b> or visit <a href="http://www.uwsatx.org">www.uwsatx.org</a>
<b>Other Emergency Preparedness Resources</b>	<b>Federal Emergency Management Agency</b> <a href="http://www.fema.gov/blog/get-ready-winter-weather">www.fema.gov/blog/get-ready-winter-weather</a> <b>American Red Cross</b> <a href="https://www.redcross.org/get-help/how-to-prepare-for-emergencies/types-of-emergencies/winter-storm.html">https://www.redcross.org/get-help/how-to-prepare-for-emergencies/types-of-emergencies/winter-storm.html</a> <b>Center for Disease Control and Prevention</b>





CITY OF SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS