

Week 1: Preparing Your Car

Michigan residents are no strangers to winter weather. However, when winter is a routine part of life, it can be easy to overlook preparing for what might happen in winter, especially during winter storms. Unfortunately most of us still have to drive during snowy weather; however, *if there is a severe winter storm you should stay put if possible until the roads are safe for traveling.*

One way to be prepared is to prepare your car in two ways.

- 1) Have a kit of necessities ready in case you cannot get home
 - Change of clothes
 - Toothbrush and toothpaste
 - Personal hygiene items
 - Antibacterial hand wipes
 - Blanket
 - Water
 - Non-perishable food
 - Car charger for cell phone

- 2) Prepare your car itself
 - Make sure your tires are not too worn down, and when replacing tires try to find a set that handles well in poor weather conditions
 - Check your battery to make sure it will make it through the winter
 - Have an auto emergency kit and make sure it includes jumper cables
 - Make sure the heat is working properly in your car
 - Never let your car get too low on gas since you never know when the weather will become severe
 - Check antifreeze levels, windshield fluid (wintertime mixture), oil
 - Make sure windshield wipers work properly and are not too worn

For more information <http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/winter/beforestorm/preparecar.asp>



What to add to your emergency kit: Make a small emergency kit for your car (as described above) and have an auto emergency kit as well in case something goes wrong with your car

Week 2: Preparing Your Home

If you use a fireplace or woodstove make sure to have your chimney or flue inspected each year. Make sure you have a smoke detector and a carbon monoxide detector. Check each month to make sure they are working and replace the batteries twice a year.

Make sure to bring pets indoors or provide adequate shelter and access to unfrozen water.

The CDC has a home checklist for winter which follows:

- Insulate walls and attic.
- Caulk and weather-strip doors and windows.
- Install storm windows or cover windows with plastic from the inside.
- Insulate any water lines that run along outer walls (water will be less likely to freeze).
- Service snow-removal equipment.
- Have chimney and flue inspected.
- Install easy-to-read outdoor thermometer.

You might also want to consider buying a generator so you can keep power (and heat) in some parts of the house in case of a power outage in a severe winter storm

For more information: <http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/winter/beforestorm/preparehome.asp>



What to add to your emergency kit: Extra batteries for carbon monoxide and smoke detectors—also for flashlight, radio, etc. in case the power goes out.

Week 3: Outdoor Safety

- Dress warmly (scarf, hat, mittens, warm socks, water-resistant shoes etc.)
- Avoid exertion- cold weather puts a strain on your heart
- Understand wind chill
- Avoid ice
- Be safe during recreation
- Be cautious about travel

More information: <http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/winter/duringstorm/outdoorsafety.asp>

The two main hazards of cold weather are frostbite and hypothermia.

Frostbite- an injury to the body that is caused by freezing. Frostbite causes a loss of feeling and color in affected areas. It most often affects the nose, ears, cheeks, chin, fingers, or toes. Frostbite can permanently damage the body, and severe cases can lead to amputation. The risk of frostbite is increased in people with reduced blood circulation and among people who are not dressed properly for extremely cold temperatures.

Hypothermia- When exposed to cold temperatures, your body begins to lose heat faster than it can be produced. Prolonged exposure to cold will eventually use up your body's stored energy. The result is hypothermia, or abnormally low body temperature. Body temperature that is too low affects the brain, making the victim unable to think clearly or move well. This makes hypothermia particularly dangerous because a person may not know it is happening and won't be able to do anything about it.

Hypothermia is most likely at very cold temperatures, but it can occur even at cool temperatures (above 40°F) if a person becomes chilled from rain, sweat, or submersion in cold water.

Victims of hypothermia are often (1) elderly people with inadequate food, clothing, or heating; (2) babies sleeping in cold bedrooms; (3) people who remain outdoors for long periods—the homeless, hikers, hunters, etc.; and (4) people who drink alcohol or use illicit drugs.ⁱ

Both frostbite and hypothermia need to be taken extremely seriously. Visit <http://emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/winter/staysafe/> for information on signs of frostbite and hypothermia and what to do in each situation.



What to add to your emergency kit: A list of symptoms of frostbite and hypothermia so you will recognize it. Add extra blankets, gloves, socks, hats, etc. in case an emergency happens in the winter or in case you lose power (and have no heat)

Week 4: If you get Stranded

Follow the CDC guidelinesⁱⁱ

- Tie a brightly colored cloth to the antenna as a signal to rescuers and raise the hood of the car (if it is not snowing).
- Move anything you need from the trunk into the passenger area.
- Wrap your entire body, including your head, in extra clothing, blankets, or newspapers.
- Stay awake. You will be less vulnerable to cold-related health problems.
- Run the motor (and heater) for about 10 minutes per hour, opening one window slightly to let in air. Make sure that snow is not blocking the exhaust pipe—this will reduce the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning.
- As you sit, keep moving your arms and legs to improve your circulation and stay warmer.
- Do not eat unmelted snow because it will lower your body temperature.
- Huddle with other people for warmth.



What to add to your emergency kit: Make sure to have a thermal blanket in your car as well as something to signal rescuers. Also, have water-proof or resistant boots in case you need to get out and walk to find shelter and/or help.

ⁱ Center for Disease Control and Prevention. 7 December 2007.

<http://emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/winter/staysafe/hypothermia.asp>

ⁱⁱ Center for Disease Control and Prevention. 7 December 2007.

<http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/winter/duringstorm/outdoorsafety.asp>