

# Tips for Households to Become Winter Ready

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## How Can Winterizing Your Home Help You Prepare?



FEMA

# What is Winter Ready?

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**Winter Ready** is FEMA's first-ever campaign encouraging people to identify and reduce the risks they face during the winter season. FEMA's #WinterReady Campaign provides easy, low-cost tips to keep you safe, more secure, and more prepared in the face of the cold months ahead.

A photograph of a person in winter gear shoveling snow on a residential street. The scene is snowy with falling snowflakes. In the background, there are houses and a car. Overlaid on the image is the text 'Why You Should Be #WINTERREADY' in blue and green. The word 'WINTER' is in blue and 'READY' is in green, with a small green star over the 'I' in 'WINTER'.

Why You Should Be  
**#WINTERREADY**

Communities across the nation experience severe winter weather in different ways, face unique risks, and have varying levels of infrastructure or experience to handle extreme weather events.

- ✓ Sixty-three percent of temperature-related deaths are attributable to cold exposure.
- ✓ Home heating is the second leading cause of home fires, and winter is when most home fires happen.

# Water Pipes

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- Keep water pipes from freezing by wrapping them in heat tape and insulating with newspaper or plastic.
- Drain the water from outdoor garden hoses. Disconnect hoses from faucets. Cover the faucets.
- Keep the furnace running at 55 ° F or higher to ensure the home stays above freezing temperatures.
- Learn how to shut off the main water valve in case of emergency.
- ✓ Water-leak sensors, emergency pressure release valves and automatic water shutoffs can help save your house from massive damage due to a burst pipe.



# Fire Safety

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- Install and maintain battery-powered or battery back-up carbon monoxide detectors and smoke alarms.
- Have carbon monoxide sensors installed on each floor. Install smoke alarms inside each bedroom and on every level of the home, including the basement.



- ✓ Carbon monoxide incidents are more common during the colder months. Half (50%) of these incidents reported to local fire departments occur between the months of November and February, peaking in December. This is likely due to the use of furnaces, portable heaters, and generators used in the colder months.

# Heat Sources

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- Have heat sources inspected and cleaned every year by a qualified professional.
- Replace furnace and heat pump filters once a month or as needed.
- Keep anything that can burn at least three feet from all heat sources.
- Ensure vents are clean and not obstructed.
- Have your fuel tanks filled and track levels throughout the winter.



- ✓ Dust accumulation in heat sources can be a fire hazard.

# Fireplaces

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- Remember to have heat sources inspected and cleaned every year by a qualified professional.
- Check the seal on the fireplace flue damper and make it as snug as possible.
- If the fireplace is never used, plug and seal the chimney flue.



- ✓ In wood-burning fireplaces, creosote buildup from burning wood or animal nests and can cause fire hazards inside the chimney if it's not cleaned.

# Slips, Trips, and Falls

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- Keep driveways and sidewalks clear of debris.
- Repair any issues with steps and handrails.
- Sprinkle deicing salt, sand, or kitty litter to make walkways and steps less slippery.
- Ice, snow and wind can weaken trees and cause branches to fall. Trim trees and remove dead branches.



- ✓ Avoid shoveling or blowing snow against the foundation of the home as it could lead to foundation issues.

# Roofing

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- Inspect the roof. Look for broken, frayed, curled or missing shingles; clogged valleys; damaged flashing; or deterioration.
- Clear debris from the roof.
- Cut back overhanging branches to prevent damage to shingles and gutters.
- Check the attic and ceilings for staining from water leakage. While you're up there, make sure the attic is properly ventilated to prevent mold and mildew.



- ✓ Snow and ice accumulation can make it challenging for your roof to sustain the unusually heavy weight.



# Gutters

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- Keep gutters clear of leaves, sticks and other debris to ensure melting snow can drain properly.
- Installing gutter guards and heat tape to keep debris out and keep the water flowing to help prevent icicles and ice dams from forming.
- Make sure downspouts direct water away from the foundation.



- ✓ Your gutters work overtime in the winter to keep water away from your home. Failing to clean your gutters before winter can lead to clogged gutters, sagging or detached gutters, mold build-up, ice dams, and/or roof leaks.

# Air Leaks

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- Detect and seal air leaks. On the outside of your house, inspect all areas where two different building materials meet. Inside your home, inspect any cracks and gaps.
- Caulk and weather-strip doors and windowsills.
- Tightly seal heavy-duty, clear plastic film to the inside of window frames during winter months.
- Install insulating drapes or shades on drafty windows.



- ✓ Opening curtains on the south-facing windows during the day allow sunlight to naturally heat the home.

# Air Flow

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- Change the direction of your ceiling fans to circulate warm air. The counter-clockwise rotation circulates cool air, while a clockwise rotation creates an updraft, which pushes the warm air that has risen back down into the room.
- Remove window AC units during winter months to prevent cold air from coming through the cracks. If you can't remove your AC unit, buy a heavy tarp to cover it.



- ✓ Look for a small switch next to the motor of your ceiling fan that directs your blades to run either clockwise or counterclockwise.

# Insulation

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- Insulate the walls between living spaces and unheated garages, shed roofs or storage areas. Also insulate foundation walls above ground level and in heated basements.



- ✓ A properly insulated attic can lower your energy bills and help guard against ice dams.
- ✓ If too much heat escapes into the attic, it can warm the ice and snow on the roof. When it refreezes, it can cause an ice dam, which can lead to water damage inside your home or possibly even a roof collapse.

# Additional Information

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For additional guidance on becoming #WinterReady, please visit <https://www.ready.gov/winter-weather>

- [Winter Storm information sheet](#)
- [Preparedness for Older Adults and People with Disabilities flyer](#)
- [Prepare your Pets flyer](#)



- ✓ You may be eligible for the [Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program \(LIHEAP\)](#) which can help you pay your heating bills or get emergency services during an energy crisis. For home improvements that save money on energy, you may qualify for help through the [Weatherization Assistance Program \(WAP\)](#).

# Contact Us

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To speak to a Community Education and Outreach (CEO) Specialist about ways to winterize your home, call 833-FEMA-4-US (833-336-2487) or email [FEMA-ILMIT@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:FEMA-ILMIT@fema.dhs.gov)

- If you use video relay service, captioned telephone service or others, give FEMA your number for that service
- FEMA collects and maintains personally identifiable information (PII) of individuals with inquiries about Hazard Mitigation and NFIP Programs. If you provide any PII in contacting us, we would only use it for the purpose of responding to your inquiry in accordance with the [Hazard Mitigation Grant Program \(HMGP\) PIA](#), [DHS/FEMA/PIA-011\(a\) National Flood Insurance Program PIA](#), [Privacy Act of 1974](#), the [E-Government Act of 2002](#) and the [Federal Records Act](#).



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