





**THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS  
EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF PUBLIC SAFETY AND SECURITY**



**MASSACHUSETTS EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
November 17, 2009

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**MEMA ISSUES TIPS TO ENSURE SAFE WINTER DRIVING**

*Tips to Prepare Your Car for the Season*

FRAMINGHAM, MA – The Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency has issued information to help people prepare for another New England Winter Season. Attached is a list of Automobile Safety Tips and a list of items to be included in your Winter Emergency Car Kit.

“Since approximately 70% of winter deaths related to snow and ice occur in automobiles, now is the proper time for individuals and families to take the necessary steps to ensure their safety on the roads during the upcoming Winter Season,” said MEMA Director Don Boyce. “Winter weather can present challenges that can be made easier with some basic planning.”

**AUTOMOBILE SAFETY TIPS**

- Have a well-stocked Winter Emergency Car Kit.
- Keep your gas tank at least half-full.
- Install good winter tires with adequate tread and pressure.
- Keep a windshield scraper and small broom for ice and snow removal. Keep all windows clear of snow and ice and keep your headlights and taillights clear, as well.
- Check your antifreeze, battery, windshield wipers and wiper fluid.
- Plan long trips carefully, listening to the radio or NOAA Weather Radio for the latest weather forecasts and road conditions. Consider Public Transportation.
- Let others know your timetable and primary and alternate routes. Allow extra time. The first ½” of snow is sometimes the most slippery. Allow adequate braking distance from the car in front of you.
- Slow down. Many times hazards like black ice are not seen until it is too late. Remember bridges and overpasses can freeze up sooner than roadways.
- Be extra alert. Snowdrifts can hide children or other vehicles.
- Yield to snowplows giving them plenty of room to safely do their job. Be patient and follow at a safe distance.
- Travel during daylight hours, and if possible, take another person with you.
- If a blizzard traps you in your car, pull off the highway. Turn on hazard lights and hang a brightly colored distress flag/cloth from your radio antenna or window.
- Remain in your vehicle where rescuers are more likely to find you. Do not set out on foot, unless you can see a building close by where you know you can take shelter.

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- Run the engine and heater about 10 minutes each hour to keep warm. When the engine is running, crack open the window slightly for ventilation. Periodically clear snow from the exhaust pipe.
- Exercise to maintain body heat, but avoid overexertion. In extreme cold, use road maps, seat covers and floor mats for insulation. Huddle with passengers.
- Take turns sleeping. One person should be awake at all times to look for rescue crews.
- Drink fluids to avoid dehydration.
- Be careful not to waste battery power. Balance electricity energy needs: the use of lights, heat and radio.
- At night, turn on the inside dome light so work crews and rescuers can see you.
- After snow stops falling, raise the hood to indicate you need help.

### **WINTER EMERGENCY CAR KIT**

- Flashlight with extra batteries
- Charged cell phone/automobile charger
- Basic first-aid kit
- Necessary medications
- Pocket knife
- Blankets or sleeping bags
- Extra clothes (include rain gear, boots, mittens, socks)
- High-calorie, non-perishable foods (dried fruits, nuts, canned food)
- Manual can opener
- Container of water
- Windshield scraper & brush
- Fire extinguisher
- Shovel
- Sand/road salt/cat litter for generating traction
- Tire chains or traction mats
- Basic tool kit (pliers, wrench, screwdriver)
- Tow rope
- Battery jumper cables
- Road flares/reflectors
- Brightly colored cloth to utilize as a flag
- Road maps

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**MEMA'S WINTER PREPAREDNESS STEPS TO PROTECT YOUR FAMILY & HOME**

FRAMINGHAM, MA – “Before snow, ice and severe winter weather hit the region, it is important that you take the proper steps to ensure the safety of your family and home,” states Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency Director Don Boyce.

- Understand the winter terminology used by weather forecasters:
  1. Winter Storm Watch – Be alert, a storm is likely.
  2. Winter Storm Warning – Take action, the storm is in or entering the area.
  3. Blizzard Warning – Snow and strong winds combined will produce blinding snow, near zero visibility, deep drifts, and life-threatening wind chill. Seek refuge immediately.
  4. Winter Weather Advisory – Winter weather conditions are expected to cause significant inconveniences and may be hazardous, especially to motorists.
  5. Frost/Freeze Warning – Below freezing temperatures are expected and may cause damage to plants, crops or fruit trees.
- Trim dead tree branches and limbs close to your home. Ice, snow and wind can combine to snap limbs that can take down power lines or damage your home.
- Clean gutters. Melting snow and ice can build up if gutters are clogged with debris. When thawing begins, the water can back up under your roof and eaves causing damage to walls and ceilings.
- Check your homeowner's insurance policy to ensure adequate coverage.
- Have your chimney flue checked for any buildup of creosote and cleaned if necessary to lessen the risk of fire.
- Have sufficient heating fuel, as regular sources may be cut off. Have the option of emergency heating equipment and fuel (a gas fireplace, wood burning stove or fireplace) so you can keep at least one room livable. Be sure the room is well ventilated.
- Ensure that your Carbon Monoxide (CO) detectors are working correctly and have fresh batteries. Check your outside fuel exhaust vents, making sure that they are not obstructed by snow or ice. Never use cooking equipment intended for outside use indoors as a heat source or cooking device.
- Make sure your home is properly insulated. Caulk and weather-strip doors and windows to keep cold air out.
- Install storm windows or cover windows with plastic from the inside to provide insulation.

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- To keep pipes from freezing, wrap them in insulation or layers of newspapers, covering the newspapers with plastic to keep out moisture. Let faucets drip a little to avoid freezing.
- Know how to safely shut off gas, electric power and water valves.
- If your water supply could be affected by a power outage (a well-water pump system), be prepared to fill your bathtub and spare containers with water. Water in the bathtub should be used for sanitation purposes only, not as drinking water. Pouring a pail of water from the tub directly into the bowl can flush a toilet.
- If pipes freeze, remove insulation, completely open all faucets and pour hot water over the pipes, starting where they are most exposed to the cold. A hand-held hair dryer, used with caution, also works well.
- If electric power is lost, do not open the refrigerator or freezer door. Food can stay cold in a full refrigerator for up to 24 hours, and in a well-packed freezer for 48 hours (24 hours if it is half-packed). If you have medication that requires refrigeration, check with your pharmacist for guidance on proper storage during an extended outage.
- Review the process for manually operating an electric garage door.
- Ensure your Winter Emergency Supply Kit is stocked with supplies to enable you to survive on your own for at least three to five days. There should be some non-perishable food, bottled water, flashlights and extra batteries along with a portable radio or NOAA Weather Radio in case of power outages or other emergencies caused by a winter storm.
- Additional items that should be included in your Winter Emergency Supply Kit are a freshly stocked first-aid kit, essential prescription medicines, non-perishable foods (those that require no refrigeration such as canned goods, dried fruits and nuts), a manual can opener, water (one gallon per person, per day), baby-care items, extra blankets, sleeping bags and a fire extinguisher.
- Ensure that your Winter Emergency Car Kit is well stocked to keep you and your vehicle safe.
- Be a Good Neighbor. Check with elderly or disabled relatives and neighbors to ensure they have made adequate preparations.

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**MEMA OFFERS PRECAUTIONS FOR EXTREME COLD WEATHER**

FRAMINGHAM, MA – “As we enter a period when we can expect extremely low temperatures and wind chills in the forecast, we all must take precautions to minimize the dangers presented by such severe weather,” stated Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency Director Don Boyce. “To that end, MEMA presents these cold weather safety tips.”

- Continue to be aware of the weather conditions by monitoring Media reports.
- Minimize outside activities, particularly the elderly and very young. Also, consider your pets.
- Dress in several layers of loose-fitting, lightweight clothing, rather than a single layer of heavy clothing. Outer garments should be tightly woven and water repellent. Wear a hat, mittens and sturdy waterproof boots, protecting your extremities. Cover your mouth with a scarf to protect your lungs.
- Excessive exposure can lead to frostbite, which is damaging to body tissue that is frozen. Frostbite causes a loss of feeling and a pale appearance in extremities, such as fingers, toes, ear lobes or the tip of the nose. If symptoms are detected, seek medical help immediately. Slowly rewarm the affected areas as you await medical assistance.
- Hypothermia can occur in extreme cases. The warning signs are uncontrollable shivering, memory loss, disorientation, incoherence, slurred speech, drowsiness and apparent exhaustion. If the person’s temperature drops below 95 degrees, seek immediate medical care. If medical assistance is not available, slowly warm up the person, body core first, wrapping them in a blanket or using your own body heat. Do not warm the extremities first, for this drives the cold blood towards the heart and can lead to heart failure. Do not give the person alcohol, coffee, tea or any hot food or beverage. Warm liquids are best.

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- Ensure you have sufficient heating fuel, as well as emergency heating equipment in case you lose electricity.
- When utilizing alternate heating sources, such as your fireplace, wood stove or space heater, take the necessary safety precautions. Keep a fire extinguisher handy; ensuring everyone knows how to use it properly. Test smoke alarms and Carbon Monoxide (CO) detectors.
- If you lose your heat, seal off unused rooms by stuffing towels in the cracks under the doors. At night, cover windows with extra blankets or sheets. Food provides the body with energy for producing its own heat.
- Be a good neighbor. Check with elderly or disabled relatives and friends to ensure their safety.
- To keep pipes from freezing, wrap them in insulation or layers of newspapers, covering the newspapers with plastic to keep out moisture. Allow a trickle of warm water to run from a faucet that is farthest from your water meter or one that has frozen in the past. This will keep the water moving so that it cannot freeze. Learn how to shut off your water if a pipe bursts.
- If pipes freeze, remove insulation, completely open all faucets and pour hot water over the pipes or wrap them with towels soaked in hot water, starting where they are most exposed to the cold. A hand-held hair dryer, used with caution, also works well.
- Have a well-stocked Winter Home Emergency Supply Kit that includes flashlights, portable radio, extra batteries, a first aid kit, bottled water and non-perishable food.
- Make sure your car is properly winterized. Keep the gas tank at least half-full. Carry a Winter Emergency Car Kit in the trunk including blankets, extra clothing, flashlight with spare batteries, a can and waterproof matches (to melt snow for drinking water), non-perishable foods, windshields scraper, shovel, sand, towrope and jumper cables.

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**MEMA ISSUES ICE SAFETY PRECAUTIONS**

FRAMINGHAM, MA - The Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) has issued information regarding safety precautions to be taken on our frozen lakes, rivers and ponds.

“Before we experience a tragedy that is unfortunately too common this time of year, it is important that we remind everyone, particularly children, of the dangers of unsafe ice,” said MEMA Director Don Boyce. “Lakes, ponds, streams and rivers throughout the Commonwealth will begin to freeze over, however, the temperature will continue to fluctuate above and below freezing, making ice conditions very uncertain. People may be a bit impatient to venture out on the ice for skating, hockey, ice fishing and other winter sports. We highly recommend the use of recreational skating areas provided by the Commonwealth and your local communities. It is very important to exercise precaution and common sense.”

Always check with your local police, fire or park department to ensure that safe ice conditions exist. However, due to the uncertainty of ice conditions and the dangers presented, many departments will not endorse the safety of lakes, ponds, streams or rivers. The strength and thickness of ice should be known before any activity takes place.

- Never go onto the ice alone. A friend may be able to rescue you or go for help if you fall through the ice.
- Always keep your pets on a leash. If a pet falls through the ice do not attempt to rescue your pet, call 9-1-1 or go for help.
- New ice is usually stronger than old ice. As ice ages, the bond between the crystals decays, making it weaker, even if melting has not occurred.
- Beware of ice covered with snow. Snow can insulate ice and keep it strong, but can also insulate it to keep it from freezing. Snow can also hide cracks, weak and open ice.

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- Slush is a danger sign, indicating that ice is no longer freezing from the bottom and can be weak or deteriorating.
- Ice formed over flowing water (rivers or lakes containing a large number of springs) is generally 15% weaker.
- Ice seldom freezes or thaws at a uniform rate. It can be one foot thick in one spot and be only one inch thick 10 feet away.
- Reach-Throw-Go. If a companion falls through the ice and you are unable to reach that person from shore, throw them something (rope, jumper cables, tree branch, etc.). If this does not work, go for help or call 9-1-1, before you also become a victim. Get medical assistance for the victim immediately.
- If you fall in, try not to panic. Turn toward the direction from which you came. Place your hands and arms on the unbroken surface, working forward by kicking your feet. Once out, remain lying on the ice (do not stand) and roll away from the hole. Crawl back to your tracks, keeping your weight distributed until you return to solid ice.

By following safety procedures, you can be safe and enjoy the many winter activities offered by the great outdoors.

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**PREPARING FOR WINTER WEATHER**

***MEMA Offers Tips to Help Keep Massachusetts Families Safe***

FRAMINGHAM, MA – A winter storm in New England can range from a moderate snowfall over a few hours to a chilling Nor'easter, bringing blizzard conditions with blinding wind-driven snow that lasts several days. People can become stranded in their automobiles or trapped at home, without utilities or other services. The aftermath of a winter storm can have an impact on a community or the entire region for days, weeks or even months. Storm effects, in New England, include large snow accumulation, extremely cold temperatures, heavy, wet snow or icing on trees and powerlines, roof collapses, coastal flooding and beach erosion.

Winter storms are also deceptive killers because most deaths are indirectly related to the actual storm. The major causes are automobile or other transportation accidents, exhaustion and heart attacks caused by overexertion, 'freezing to death' and asphyxiation from improper heating sources. House fires occur more frequently in the winter due to lack of proper safety precautions when using alternate heating sources, like unattended fires and space heaters.

"As with most potential disasters, preparedness, monitoring the Media and common sense can minimize the danger to you and your family," states Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency Director Don Boyce. "That is why MEMA is sharing important winter safety information through the Media and the MEMA website over the next few weeks."

Areas to be covered in this series will include the proper steps to take to prepare your family and home for the winter season, automobile and driving safety, ice safety, protecting your pets, responding to power outages, extreme temperatures, roof collapse and recovering from a winter storm.

Those who already have an All-Hazard Emergency Supply Kit, as MEMA continues to recommend, are ahead of the curve. However, it is important to check your kit, to ensure it is properly stocked with enough supplies to survive on your own for at least three to five days. Now is also the time to review for Family Communication Plan.

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## **WINTER EMERGENCY SUPPLY KIT**

- Flashlight and extra batteries
- Portable radio or NOAA Weather Radio with extra batteries
- Charged cell phone
- First-aid kit
- Essential prescription medicines
- Non-perishable Food
- Manual can opener
- Water (one gallon per person/per day)
- Baby items
- Extra blankets and sleeping bags
- Fire extinguisher

## **FAMILY EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS PLAN**

Develop a 'Family Emergency Communication Plan' in case family members are separated from one another during a winter storm (a real possibility during the day when adults are at work and children are at school), and have a plan for getting back together.

- Ask an out-of-state relative or friend to serve as the 'family contact'. After a disaster, it is often easier to call long distance than across town. Also, calling outside the area will probably be easier than calling into a disaster area.
- Make sure everyone knows the name, address and telephone number of the contact person.
- Sometimes an emergency could impact your neighborhood or small section of town. Decide on an alternate meeting area for family members.
- Be familiar with the Emergency Plans at your children's school and your workplace.
- Be aware of the location of your community's potential emergency shelters and possible evacuation routes.

These steps can help reassure everyone's safety and minimize the stress associated with emergencies.

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**MEMA POSTS ROOF COLLAPSE & STORM DRAIN WARNING INFORMATION**

***Snow Buildup & Subsequent Heavy Rain Can Present Dangers***

FRAMINGHAM, MA – “If not cleared off, dry, fluffy snow piled on roofs can act as a sponge, absorbing any additional sleet and rain, adding weight and stress to structures.” states Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) Director Don Boyce. “Flat, commercial roofs are most susceptible if they are not draining properly. Additionally, MEMA encourages citizens to clear storm drains in their neighborhoods to minimize local flooding problems from this run-off.”

In many cases, roof ice dams can form causing water build-up, leading to interior damage. To minimize the risk of over-stressing a building roof due to accumulated or drifting snow:

- Be on the alert for large accumulating snow build-up or snowdrifts on your roofs.
- If roof snow can be removed, from the ground, with the use of a snow rake (available at most hardware stores), do so. Use caution, as metal snow rakes conduct electricity if they come into contact with a power line.
- Try to avoid working from ladders, as ladder rungs tend to ice up. Snow and ice collect on boot soles, and metal ladders.
- Flat roofs can be shoveled clear, but only if it is determined that the roof is safe to stand upon. Exercise care when on the roof to avoid potentially dangerous falls.
- Flat roof drainage systems should be kept clear to minimize the risk of excess roof ponding in the event of subsequent heavy rainfall or melting.
- Large icicles can form on roof overhangs, but do not necessarily mean ice damming is occurring. Icicles overhanging doorways and walkways can be dangerous and should be carefully removed.

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- All of the mentioned actions should only be performed by able-bodied adults, as the snow is heavy, and roofs and other surfaces may be slippery. Protective headgear and eye protection is recommended.

This roof collapse alert is issued by the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA), in conjunction with the State Board of Building Regulations and Standards.

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**MEMA ISSUES WINTER POWER OUTAGE SAFETY TIPS**

FRAMINGHAM, MA – “Severe Winter Weather, including heavy wet snow, sleet, freezing rain and high winds, has the potential to cause power outages throughout the Commonwealth,” warns Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency Director Don Boyce. “The weight of a one-half inch ice build-up can be enough to snap tree limbs, causing them to fall and bring down power lines disrupting electrical service.”

The Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) has the following tips for dealing with a possible winter power outage:

- Check flashlights and portable radios to ensure that they are working, and you have extra batteries. A radio is an important source of weather and emergency information during a storm.
- The use of candles is strongly discouraged.
- Have sufficient heating fuel, as regular sources may be cut off. Have emergency heating equipment and fuel (a gas fireplace, wood burning stove or fireplace) so you can keep at least one room livable. Be sure the room is well ventilated.
- If utilizing an emergency generator, read, understand and follow the manufacturer’s instructions. Always operate emergency generators outdoors and away from any open window. Make sure your generator is properly grounded and installed as you may be liable for damage or injury to people and property that may result from improperly installed or operated equipment.
- Ensure that your Carbon Monoxide (CO) detectors are working correctly and have fresh batteries. Check your outside fuel exhaust vents, making sure that they are not obstructed by snow or ice. Never use cooking equipment intended for outside use indoors as a heat source or cooking device.
- If your water supply could be affected by a power outage (a well-water pump system), fill your bathtub and spare containers with water. Water in the bathtub should be used for sanitation purposes only, not as drinking water. Pouring a pail of water from the tub directly into the bowl can flush a toilet.

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- If pipes freeze, remove insulation, completely open all faucets and pour hot water over the pipes, starting where they are most exposed to the cold. A hand-held hair dryer, used with caution, also works well.
- Set your refrigerator and freezer to their coldest settings (remember to reset them back to normal once power is restored). During an outage, do not open the refrigerator or freezer door. Food can stay cold in a full refrigerator for up to 24 hours, and in a well-packed freezer for 48 hours (24 hours if it is half-packed). If you have medication that requires refrigeration, check with your pharmacist for guidance on proper storage during an extended outage.
- In order to protect against possible voltage irregularities that can occur when power is restored, you should unplug all sensitive electronic equipment, including TVs, stereo, VCR, microwave oven, computer, cordless telephone, answering machine and garage door opener. Be sure to leave one light on, so you will know when power is restored.
- Review the process for manually operating an electric garage door.
- If you lose your heat, seal off unused rooms by stuffing towels in the cracks under the doors. At night, cover windows with extra blankets or sheets. Food provides the body with energy for producing its own heat.
- Check with elderly or disabled relatives and neighbors to ensure their safety.
- Be extra cautious if you go outside to inspect for damage after a storm. Downed or hanging electrical wires can be hidden by snowdrifts, trees or debris, and could be live. Never attempt to touch or move downed lines. Keep children and pets away from them.
- Do not touch anything power lines are touching, such as tree branches or fences. Always assume a downed line is a live line. Call your utility company to report any outage-related problem.
- Make sure you always have a well-stocked Winter Home Emergency Supply Kit that includes flashlights, portable radio, extra batteries, a first aid kit, bottled water, non-perishable food and a manual can opener.

The Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) is the state agency responsible for coordinating federal, state, local, voluntary and private resources during emergencies and disasters in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. MEMA provides leadership to: develop plans for effective response to all hazards, disasters or threats; train emergency personnel to protect the public; provide information to the citizenry; and assist individuals, families, businesses and communities to mitigate against, prepare for, and respond to and recover from emergencies, both natural and man made. For additional information about MEMA and Winter Preparedness, go to the MEMA website at [www.mass.gov/mema](http://www.mass.gov/mema).