Winter storms

The quiet dangers are cold, carbon monoxide, and the car. Most of the plan is done before the storm.

BEFORE THE STORM

- Check forecasts regularly. They can give several days of notice.
- Keep the gas tank near full, and check the heater, defroster, brakes, battery and tires.
- Keep blankets, a flashlight, water, snacks, a first aid kit, a shovel, a scraper, jumper cables, and cat litter or sand in the car.
- Insulate water lines on exterior walls. Bring pets indoors, or give them shelter and unfrozen water.

HEAT WITHOUT HARM

- Vent fuel-burning equipment outdoors, and have the furnace and vent checked each winter.
- Put a battery-powered carbon monoxide detector near every sleeping area. Test it monthly.
- Never burn charcoal indoors. Never run a car in an attached garage, even with the door open.
- Run a generator outdoors, more than 20 feet from windows, doors and vents.
- CO symptoms look like the flu: headache, dizziness, weakness, nausea, confusion. People who are asleep can die before symptoms appear.

COLD ON THE BODY

- **Hypothermia, adults:** shivering, exhaustion, confusion, fumbling hands, memory loss, slurred speech, drowsiness. **Infants:** bright red, cold skin and very low energy.
- Below 95°F body temperature, get medical help right away. Move the person somewhere warm, remove wet clothing, wrap them in dry blankets, and give no alcohol.
- **Frostbite:** redness or pain, white or grayish-yellow skin, skin that feels firm or waxy, numbness. Do not rub it. Use warm, not hot, water or body heat, and see a provider.

IF THE POWER IS OUT

- A closed refrigerator keeps food safe for about 4 hours. A full freezer holds about 48 hours, a half-full one about 24.
- Avoid travel during a storm if you can.

For our household

Our warm room and backup heat

CO detectors last tested on

Car kit kept at

Neighbor or relative who checks on us

Sources: CDC, Preparing for a Winter Storm; CDC, Preventing Hypothermia and Frostbite; CDC, Carbon Monoxide; FoodSafety.gov, Food Safety During a Power Outage. Checked October 2026. Hypothermia and frostbite need medical care. If someone seems very cold and confused, call 911.