

Develop a Family Disaster Plan for a Winter Storm

Missouri families are encouraged to have a Family Disaster Plan. Since hundreds of thousands of citizens experienced power due to five federally declared disaster declarations for ice storms since 2006, it is important to develop a winter storm-specific family disaster plan.

Before developing the family plan, learn about your area's winter storm risk. Go to the National Weather Service office covering your county. The link is www.weather.gov then type in St. Louis, Springfield, Pleasant Hill (Kansas City), or Paducah for information about your area's winter storm risk.

Understanding the National Weather Service (NWS) forecaster terms is important. A **Winter Storm Watch** indicates severe winter weather may affect your area. A **Winter Storm Warning** indicates severe winter weather is in the area or expected immediately. **Wind Chill** is a calculation of how cold it feels when the effects of wind speed and temperature are combined.

Make a game out of teaching your children about winter family disaster plans. Discuss what to do if a winter storm WATCH or WARNING is issued. Designate one family member as the winter storm preparedness leader. Have him or her discuss what to do if a winter storm watch or warning is issued. Have another family member state what he or she would do if caught outside or in a vehicle during a winter storm. Everyone should know what to do in case all family members are not together. Discussing winter storms ahead of time helps reduce fear and lets everyone know how to respond during a winter storm.

Incorporate the following items into your winter disaster plan:

- **Acquire** snow shovels, snow blower, snow blade, or a snow removal service before winter season. Also acquire Rock salt or other ice melting products for walkways and driveways.
- **Keep your car's** gas tank full for emergency use and to keep the fuel line from freezing. Create a kit for your car with a starter cables, shovel, sand or shingles for traction, extra blankets, and energy snacks.
- **Take** a first aid course to learn how to treat exposure to the cold, frostbite, and hypothermia.
- **Create a winter supplies kit**, which includes the following items: appropriate winter outdoor clothing including coat, mittens, hat and water-resistant boots for each family member; acquire extra blankets and warm clothing in the event of power outages, extra water and food that doesn't require cooking if there are power outages.

For additional planning and winter preparedness information:

Missouri's Ready in 3 program: http://www.dhss.mo.gov/Ready_in_3

SEMA: <http://sema.dps.mo.gov/semapage.htm>

Missouri Dept of Transportation's Road Conditions: www.modot.org

National Weather Service in St. Louis Winter Campaign: <http://www.crh.noaa.gov/lx/?n=winterday>

NWS's Winter Deceptive Killer Brochure: <http://www.weather.gov/os/brochures/winterstorm.pdf>

FEMA's Winter Awareness Campaign: <http://www.fema.gov/areyouready/winter.shtm>