



Disaster and Emergency Management Resources

During a Winter Storm: Confined to Your Home

With the Loss of Heat During the Winter

- Conserve body heat by putting on extra clothing and using extra blankets and coverings to trap body heat.
- Use an alternative heating source such as a fireplace or a wood- or coal-burning stove. You can burn coal in a fireplace or stove if you make a grate to hold it, allowing air to circulate underneath. “Hardware cloth” screening placed on a standard wood grate will keep coal from falling through. Tightly rolled newspapers or magazines can be used for paper logs.
- Select a room to be heated and close off all other rooms.
- Safety is of prime importance during a heating emergency. Follow all manufacturer’s recommendations regarding proper ventilation and other safety precautions. Keep a smoke and carbon monoxide detector readily available as well as a working fire extinguisher.
- Other measures to take during an extended loss of power in the winter can be found in the **disaster preparedness** section of this manual.

Protecting Your Pipes Against Freezing

- During extremely cold temperatures, allow a faucet to drip slightly (lukewarm water) to minimize freezing. And check pipes around your water meter, in unheated areas, near exterior walls, and in crawl spaces. These tend to be vulnerable to freezing conditions.
- If it seems likely that the heat will be off for several hours in below freezing temperatures, protect exposed plumbing.
 - Drain all pipes (including hot water heating pipes) in any rooms where the temperature falls below freezing. You may need to drain only portions of your system.
 - Drain the sink, tub, and shower traps; toilet tanks and bowls; hot water heater; dish and clothes washers; water pumps; and furnace boiler.
 - You may use water from your hot water heater and toilet tanks (not the bowls) for drinking and household use. Water from the heating system will be unfit for drinking or other household use.

If a Pipe Freezes

To thaw a frozen pipe, heat water on the stove, soak towels in the hot water, and wrap them around the pipe

- If a faucet or pipe inside your house freezes, you can thaw it using a good hair dryer. (For safety purposes, avoid operating a hair dryer around standing water).
- When thawing a pipe, start thawing it nearest to the faucet. Make sure the faucet is turned on so that melted water can drip out.

If a Pipe Bursts

- Shut off water at the main valve.
- If the break is in a hot water pipe, close the valve on top of the water heater.
- Call a plumber. Keep an emergency number nearby for quick access.

Seeking Help

Blizzards may require long periods of isolation. If you need outside help during this time, you should know the following emergency distress signals to signal aircraft:

- Need doctor.....I
- Need medical supplies.....II
- Need food and water.....F
- Need fuel.....L
- International distress signal.....SOS

Make these signals on the ground where they will be clearly visible from the air. The letters should be at least 10 feet tall. Use black cloth or plastic, hay, boards or other material readily seen on the white snow. If no materials are available, tramp the letters into the snow, deep enough to create as much shadow as possible.

Adapted from resource material developed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency