

# Winter Weather Safety and Preparedness

## Winter Safety Tips for the Home

Every home should have a disaster supplies kit: a battery-operated radio, flashlight, matches, extra batteries and an extra set of house and car keys. Have an ample supply of wood for the fireplace and plenty of nonperishable foods that can be eaten without heating. Keep bottled water and juices on hand in case your power and water supplies are interrupted.

Other items to consider including in the kit are extra prescription medication and items for babies or family members with special needs. Consider storing an ample supply of necessary items to sustain every member in the home for at least three days, in case you're snowed or iced in and cannot leave the home.

### Other things to consider for your home during the winter months include:

- ◆ Remove dead tree branches. Ice and snow, combined with winter winds can cause limbs to snap and break and could do damage to your home.
- ◆ Clean gutters. Snow and ice can build up quickly, especially if your gutters are clogged with debris. When thawing begins, water from melting ice has nowhere to drain and can back up under your roof and eaves, causing water damage to walls and ceilings. Consider buying screens to keep your gutters debris-free.
- ◆ Check your homeowner's insurance policy to make sure coverage is adequate for the type of winter weather in your area. Learn what is excluded from the policy.
- ◆ Make sure auxiliary heaters and fireplaces are adequately maintained and serviced. Many fires related to auxiliary heating sources are preventable through simple maintenance. Before installing a wood-burning stove, check with local fire officials as to codes and proper installation techniques. Do not store kerosene in a non-approved container or in your home and be sure to keep alternative heat sources from flammable materials (walls, curtains, etc.).
- ◆ During the winter, drain pipes if your power goes off or if you plan an extended stay away from home. To drain, turn off the water heater and main water supply, open all faucets in the house and drain the system by keeping the valves open. Drain all toilets by holding the lever down until the tank is empty.
- ◆ If well water is used, the pump's electric switch should be shut off and the pressure tank and system should be drained.