

For Immediate Release

The American Red Cross Urges Residents to Take Steps to Prepare for Winter Storms Before They Hit

December 12, 2007 – With weather reports calling for another winter storm to hit central Ohio this weekend, the American Red Cross of Greater Columbus is urging families and individuals to take precautions against the deceptive dangers of wintry weather. Severe winter weather can affect people in many different ways. People can become trapped at home without utilities or other services; motorists can become stranded in their vehicles; and walking and driving can become hazardous. But people can stay safer if they listen to the advice of local authorities and take action to get prepared ahead of time. The Red Cross recommends everyone prepare for severe weather conditions in the following ways:

Get a Disaster Supplies Kit For Your Home:

- Three-day supply of water (one gallon of water per person per day for drinking and hygiene).
- Three-day supply of non perishable, high-energy food and a manual can opener.
- First aid kit and essential medications.
- Battery-powered or hand-cranked radio.
- Flashlight and extra batteries.
- Extra warm clothing, including boots, mittens and a hat.

Be Informed:

Remember to listen to your local weather station for the latest winter storm information.

- Winter storm watch: A winter storm is possible in your area.
- Winter storm warning: A winter storm is headed for your area.
- A blizzard warning: Strong winds, blinding wind-driven snow, and dangerous wind chill are expected. Seek shelter immediately.

Winter-proof your vehicle

- Get your vehicle checked by a mechanic and pay attention to the battery, tire pressure, heater, defroster, wiper blades and washer fluid.
- Carry [a disaster supplies kit](#) in your vehicle at all times.
- Make sure you include winter items like shovel, windshield scraper, blankets and warm clothing, flares, jumper cables, and sand or cat litter for traction.
- Ensure that you have a full tank of gas to avoid ice build-up in the fuel tank and fuel lines.

Before you hit the roads

- Let your family or friends know your destination, your primary and alternate routes, and when you expect to arrive. If your vehicle gets stuck along the way, help can be sent along your predetermined route.

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- Pay attention to the weather forecast. Your local TV and radio stations can provide updated storm information that can help you avoid treacherous weather.
- Motorists should also be cautious about animals on the highway. Stay alert for deer-crossing signs.

If you are stranded

- Stranded drivers should stay with the vehicle and not try to walk to safety. You can quickly become disoriented in wind-driven snow and run the risk of developing hypothermia and frostbite.
- Exercise your arms and legs to maintain body heat.
- Change out of wet clothing, using dry replacements from your supplies kit to prevent hypothermia.
- Use the heater for 10 minutes every hour and leave the overhead light on when the engine is running so you can be seen.
- Keep the exhaust pipe clear so fumes won't back up in the vehicle
- Make it easier for rescuers to find you by tying a brightly colored cloth to the antenna
- After the snow has subsided, raise the hood to indicate you need help.

For additional [winter safety tips](#) and information on building disaster supplies kits, visit columbus.redcross.org.

The American Red Cross of Greater Columbus is dedicated to helping make families and communities safer at home and around the world. Sustained by over 600 volunteers, the Red Cross provides assistance to more than 500 families each year after home fires and other disasters strike. Last year the organization trained and educated more than 97,000 area residents in vital lifesaving skills like first aid, CPR and how to prepare for emergencies. The Red Cross also sent more than 800 emergency messages between members of the military and their families. The community transportation program provides rides to medical appointments for seniors and individuals with disabilities, logging more than 19,600 trips last year. All these programs and more are made possible by the donations of time and money from the greater Columbus community.

Michael Carroll is the CEO of the American Red Cross of Greater Columbus and Michael Schoedinger serves as the board chair.

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