

As we head into the winter storm season, it is crucial to learn what to do to keep you and your loved ones safe!! Each year, hundreds of Americans are injured or killed by exposure to cold, vehicle accidents on windy/wintry roads and fires cause by the improper use of heaters.

Before a winter snow storm- make sure you are prepared! Being prepared means assembling an emergency preparedness kit, creating a household evacuation plan that includes you pets and staying informed about your community's risk and response plans. There are many different organizations that can tell you what should be in your family's emergency preparedness kit, including the American Red Cross, West Seattle Be Prepared, and the Seattle Officer of Emergency Management. A few basic essentials for a family emergency kit include: food, water, flashlight, cell phone with charger, extra batteries, maps of the area and a first aid kit.

During a winter snow storm- do not drive unnecessarily, if you have the ability to stay home, do so. If you must drive- plan to travel during daylight if at all possible, check weather reports for any areas that you will be driving through before leaving home, keep spare an emergency kit, as well as spare blankets and coats in your trunk at all times, keep your headlights on during any situation with lowered visibility, even during the day (including fog, snow, extreme wind, and rain), turn your car's radio to a station that will keep you updated with any news about approaching storms in the area, never use your cellphone or other devices that could be distracting while driving, alert a friend or family member when you leave home and arrive at your destination when driving in bad weather and if you begin to feel uncomfortable behind the wheel- pull over as soon as you can safely do so.

Windstorms are particularly common in the Pacific NW during this time of year; It is extremely important that every family prepares accordingly! Power outages are one of the most significant problem caused by windstorms, and much of the damage caused during these storms come from falling trees. Areas with heavy tree cover and limited street connections to the rest of the city are vulnerable to power outages and transportation problems. Before a wind storm - contact vendors to know the proper use of home generators, know what emergency plans are in place at your workplace, school and daycare center, conduct a home safety evaluation (including garage doors, windows, doors and nearby trees) and fasten down any outdoor equipment and/or move items indoors as needed. During a windstorm- don't panic, listen to your radio for emergency instructions and turn off all natural gas appliances; if you are indoors- move away from windows and objects that could fall, go to lower floors in multi-story homes; if you are outdoors- move into a building, avoid downed powerlines, utility poles and trees; if you are driving- when you park, stop away from trees, avoid walking under overpasses, powerlines and other hazards.

For more information, please visit:

The American Red Cross: <http://www.redcross.org/get-help/how-to-prepare-for-emergencies>

The Seattle Officer of Emergency Management: <http://www.seattle.gov/emergency-management>

West Seattle Be Prepared: <http://westseattlebeprepared.org/>

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