

Winter is Here - Are You Ready?

Virginia's winters can be cold, snowy, icy and dangerous. Protect yourself and your home with these tips:

- **If you heat with a fireplace or wood stove:** Have a professional check it, especially if it has been a long time since the last cleaning. Residue can build up and cause fires.
- **Don't use candles during power outages:** Many home fires in winter are caused by candles. Flashlights are much safer. Be sure to have extra batteries on hand.
- **Safe use of space heaters:** Never plug them into extension cords; plug into wall outlets. Keep space heaters at least three feet from other objects, and turn off before going to bed.
- **Using kerosene or propane heaters:** These must be used with great caution. The room must be ventilated by opening a window. Keep heaters at least three feet away from flammable objects such as curtains, blankets and furniture. Place heaters on a hard surface, not on carpet. Refuel them outdoors **after** they have cooled.
- **Get where you need to be before the weather gets bad.** It's always best to stay off roads during winter storms. Most traffic crashes happen within the first two hours after a storm starts. Stay aware of winter storm watches and warnings. Get road conditions by calling 511 or visiting www.511Virginia.org.
- **Stay informed during power outages.** Be sure you have a battery-powered or hand-crank radio (and extra batteries). Get one with Weather Radio so you can hear local radio stations and reports directly from the National Weather Service. These are available at electronics and sporting goods stores, department stores, boat and marine accessory stores, through catalogues and online. Prices range from \$20-100.
- **Most importantly:** You need a family emergency plan. If your family cannot return home because of severe weather or closed roads, you need to decide now on where you will meet to reunite. You also need an out-of-town relative or friend to be your family emergency contact. Learn more about **making a plan** for winter weather and all emergencies - and get a free family emergency plan worksheet - at www.ReadyVirginia.gov.