



**American
Red Cross**

Weather Alert

American Red Cross Cold Weather Safety Tips

Cold weather can be dangerous if you're not prepared. The American Red Cross reminds people to take precautions against the cold. More American Red Cross disaster preparedness information is available at www.charteroak.redcross.org.

Protect Yourself from Freezing Temperatures

Avoid unnecessary exposure to the cold. Be aware of both the temperature and the wind chill when planning outdoor activities. When you prepare to go outside in severe cold weather, please remember the following:

- Most of your body heat is lost through your head so wear a hat, preferably one that covers your ears.
- Dressing in layers helps you retain heat. You can remove layers as needed if you become too warm.
- Mittens provide more warmth to your hands than gloves.
- Wear waterproof, insulated boots to help avoid hypothermia or frostbite by keeping your feet warm and dry and to maintain your footing in ice and snow.
- Get out of wet clothes immediately and warm the core body temperature with a blanket or warm fluids like hot cider or soup. Avoid drinking caffeine or alcohol if you expect you or someone you are trying to help has hypothermia or frostbite.
- Recognize the symptoms of hypothermia that can be a serious medical condition: confusion, dizziness, exhaustion and severe shivering. Seek medical attention immediately if you have these symptoms.
- Recognize frostbite warning signs: gray, white or yellow skin discoloration, numbness, waxy feeling skin. Seek medical attention immediately if you have these symptoms.

Heat Your Home Safely

As families turn to alternative heating sources out of necessity or to avoid the rising cost of fuel, they should take the following precautions:

- **Use caution with portable space heaters** - Heating equipment is the leading cause of home fires during the winter months, according to the National Fire Prevention Association. About two-thirds of home heating fire deaths are caused by portable or fixed space heaters.
 - To prevent fire, **place space heaters at least three feet away from anything combustible**, including wallpaper, bedding, clothing, pets, and people.
 - Never leave space heaters operating when you are not in the room or when you go to bed. Don't leave children or pets unattended near space heaters.
 - Drying wet mittens or other clothing over space heaters is a fire hazard.
- Make sure smoke and carbon monoxide (CO) alarms are working properly and replace batteries as necessary.
- Have your chimney connections and flues inspected by a professional and cleaned if necessary prior to the start of every heating season.
- Use a sturdy fireplace screen when burning fires. Burn only wood - never burn paper or pine boughs.
- Do not use candles for lighting if the power goes out. Use flashlights only.
- **Always operate portable generators outdoors** - never inside, including the basement or garage. Do not connect a generator directly to your home's wiring – leave that work to a professional electrician and buy a generator designed for that purpose. The safest thing to do is to connect the equipment you want to power directly to the outlets on the generator. Connecting a cord from the generator to a point on the permanent wiring system and backfeeding power to your home **is an unsafe method** to supply a building with power.
- Don't overload your electrical outlets. Be careful of extension cords that present hazardous walkways.

Prevent frozen pipes

Now is the time to protect your house pipes from freezing and bursting. With the cold weather upon us, preventive action may make all the difference.

- Keep garage doors closed if there are water supply lines in the garage.
- Open kitchen and bathroom cabinet doors to allow warmer air to circulate around the plumbing. Be sure to move any harmful cleaners and household chemicals up out of the reach of children.
- When the temperature is very low outside, let the cold water drip from faucets served by exposed pipes or pipes in exterior walls. Running water through the pipe - even at a trickle - helps prevent pipes from freezing because the temperature of the water running through it is above freezing.
- Keep the thermostat set to the same temperature both during the day and at night. By temporarily suspending the use of lower nighttime temperatures, you may incur a higher heating bill, but you can prevent a much more costly repair job if pipes freeze and burst.
- If you will be going away during cold weather, leave the heat on in your home, set to a temperature no lower than 55°F.