



Extreme Winter Weather and COVID-19

Tips for Preparing Your Family and Staff

Summary

New York City winter weather can present heavy snowstorms, freezing temperatures, icy conditions, sleet, and freezing rain. Severe weather events, coupled with the ongoing [COVID-19 pandemic](#), can pose dangerous hazards to health and safety.

This compilation of [New York City](#) and [Centers for Disease Control \(CDC\)](#) severe weather preparedness and emergency resources may serve as a guideline for actions New Yorkers can take in the event of power outages, heat outages, and other loss of utilities in the event of severe winter weather – all while preventing the spread of COVID-19. Be sure to check [NYC Health](#) the most up-to-date information about COVID-19 in New York City.

Severe Winter Weather

[New York City Emergency Management](#) provides a comprehensive list of resources for staying safe before and during snowstorms.

Steps to Take to Prepare BEFORE a Snowstorm:

1. Develop a [household disaster plan](#) – ensure all household members know how they can contact each other in case of emergency.
2. Ensure each household member has up-to-date contact information for **personal medical and healthcare providers**, such as primary care physicians, pediatricians, dentists, and community health clinics.
3. If you have **pets or service animals**, make sure they are accounted for in your household disaster plan. For information about how to prepare your pet or service animal for a severe weather event, evacuation, or other emergency, click [here](#).
4. Prepare an emergency supply kit. Click [here](#) for more information about how to prepare an emergency supply kit.
 - a. Add **winter essentials** to your emergency supply kit, such as extra blankets, gloves, warm socks, hats, and handwarmers.
 - b. Ensure you have at least seven days' worth of up-to-date **prescription and over-the-counter medications**.
 - c. To prevent the spread of COVID-19, include **extra face masks** (at least two masks per household member above age 2), **hand sanitizer** with at least 60% alcohol, liquid or bar soap, and disinfecting wipes or spray in your emergency supply kit.
5. Sign up for free [Notify NYC](#) emergency alerts for up-to-date information about severe weather and city services.



COVID Tip for Snowstorm Preparedness:

Make sure your emergency supply kit includes basic sanitizing supplies and PPE! Make sure to include **extra face masks** (at least two masks per household member above age 2), **hand sanitizer** with at least 60% alcohol, liquid or bar **soap**, and **disinfecting wipes or spray** in your emergency supply kit.

Click [here](#) for more information on how community and faith-based organizations can prepare for disasters, such as snowstorms. For information about how to winterize your residence and vehicle, click [here](#).

Steps to Take DURING a Snowstorm:

1. Listen to **local news and radio stations** for the most up-to-date snowstorm information.
2. **Stay indoors**. Avoid all unnecessary travel. If you must go outdoors, dress in warm layers and cover all exposed body parts, such as ears, noses, and fingertips.
3. Keep your **cellphone fully charged** in the event of a power outage or other emergency.
4. For non-emergency assistance and city services updates, contact **311**. Contact **911** if you are in immediate danger.

Cold Weather Health and Safety Tips:

The [NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene](#) offers the following guideline for winter weather health and safety tips in the time of COVID-19:

1. Exposure to extreme winter temperatures can lead to **deadly health hazards**, like hypothermia or frostbite.
 - **Layer clothing** for increased insulation and cover all exposed body parts, such as ears, noses, and fingertips. Keep clothing dry and remove any wet clothing immediately.
2. Continue to **self-monitor for symptoms of COVID-19**. For more information about identifying symptoms, testing, what to do if you are sick, and how to get care, click [here](#).

Extreme Weather Events and COVID-19:

Being prepared for severe winter and other weather events during the COVID-19 pandemic is important to protect everyone's health and safety. The CDC has compiled comprehensive resources for how to stay safe during [severe winter weather events and COVID-19](#).

Use their resources for even more robust tips for staying safe during all kinds of extreme weather, including snowstorms, hurricanes, and more.



Utility Outages:

It is important to be prepared for **potential utilities disruptions** due to inclement weather. NYC Emergency Management provides a comprehensive guideline for how to prepare beforehand and what to do during and after a power or heat outage. Click [here](#) for more information.

What to Do if You Lose Power?

1. In the event of power loss, **contact your electricity provider immediately** to report power outages:
 - [Con Edison](#): 1-800-75-CONED (1-800-752-6633); TTY: 1-800-642-2308
 - [Public Service Electric and Gas Company – Long Island \(PSEG Long Island\)](#): 1-800-490-0025; TTY: 631-755-6660
 - [National Grid](#): 718-643-4050; TTY: 718-237-2857
2. Check to see if a **fuse was blown** or a **circuit breaker tripped**.
3. **Stay inside**. If you must go outside, avoid down and dangling power lines.
4. Limit opening and closing **refrigerators and freezers** as much as possible to prevent food from spoiling.
5. **Check in (safely!)** on household members, relatives, and friends with disabilities, access needs, and/or are age 65 and older.

Power Outages in the Time of COVID-19:

Severe weather events, coupled with the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, can pose dangerous health and safety risks to you and others. As you check in on your friends, family members, and neighbors, make sure to avoid in-person check ins with those outside your household, if possible.

TIP: If you or someone in your household relies on medical equipment that requires electric power, **ask your utility company** if the medical equipment qualifies you to be listed as a life-sustaining equipment customer.

What to Do if You Lose Heat?

1. All New York City tenants are **legally entitled to heat and hot water**. Click [here](#) for more information about tenants' rights and responsibilities.
2. Tenants without heat or hot water can **file a complaint** by calling 311 or online at portal.nyc.gov/311. New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) residents should **contact NYCHA directly** about heat outages. **If you are in immediate danger, call 911.**
3. **Insulate your home** as much as possible by closing curtains or shades and covering windows with towels or blankets.
4. **Dress warmly** and layer clothing. Wear hats, gloves, and warm socks.
5. Allow faucets to drip slightly to **prevent pipes from freezing**.
6. Never use your oven or stove to heat your home.



7. Use a portable **space heater** to heat your home. Never leave a space heater unattended.
8. [NYC Emergency Management](#) offers more information on what to do if you lose heat during a winter snowstorm.

Extended Heat Outages in the Time of COVID-19:

If your heat goes out for an extended period of time, you may need to find an alternate location to stay.

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic presents dangerous health hazards for you and others. **Staying with friends or relatives should be a last resort**, in the event of a long-term heat outage.

Before arriving, confirm with friends or relatives that they do not currently present symptoms of COVID-19, whether they are at high risk of developing severe COVID-19 and have not knowingly been recently exposed to the virus. If you or others are at high-risk for developing severe COVID-19, seek alternative arrangements, if possible.

If you *must* stay with those outside your immediate household make sure you follow these tips:

- Follow [CDC guidelines](#) for how to protect yourself and others.
- Always wear a **face mask** when interacting with those outside your immediate household. Children under age two should not wear a face mask.
- Maintain a **social distance** of at least six feet from others.
- **Avoid touching high-contact surfaces**, such as doorknobs, countertops, and handrails, as much as possible. Wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol content after touching high-contact surfaces.
- **Clean and disinfect** high-contact surfaces, cell phones, children's toys, and other electronics regularly.
- **Do not share** dishes, drinking glasses, cups, or eating utensils. Non-disposable food service items used should be handled with gloves and washed with dish soap and hot water or in a dishwasher.
- For information about steps to take if must evacuate to an **emergency shelter** and how to prevent the spread of COVID-19, click [here](#).

Please email info@humanservicescouncil.org with any questions.

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