



Edison Electric  
INSTITUTE

# Winter Storm Safety Tips



## Before the Storm

- Update your phone number and e-mail address with your electric company so you can be served faster in the event of an outage.
- Purchase appliances with built-in surge protection or install surge protectors to help safeguard valuable electronic equipment, such as computers and home entertainment systems. Plug computers and other sensitive equipment into a separate, grounded circuit to isolate them from fluctuations caused when a major appliance restarts. Consider having a lightning arrester installed at your main circuit panel.
- Keep all flammable objects at least three feet from any heat source, such as fireplaces, radiators, and space heaters.
- Develop an emergency plan that addresses any special medical needs you or your family members have. Call your local emergency management office to discuss necessary arrangements.
- Have your Emergency Outage Kit stocked and readily available. Stock up on groceries, water, medications, hygiene items including face coverings and hand sanitizer, batteries, and other necessities.
- Make sure you have rock salt to melt ice on walkways, snow shovels and other snow removal equipment, and adequate clothing and blankets. Store a good supply of wood for your fireplace or wood-burning stove, or purchase a kerosene heater.

- Pay attention to local weather reports.

- Regularly test your home's smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors.

## During the Storm

- Stay indoors and avoid unnecessary travel.
- Monitor weather bulletins on a battery-powered radio.
- Stay dry and dress warmly in loose-fitting layers of clothing. Keep a hat, scarf, boots, wool socks, gloves or mittens, and ear-muffs or a head band on hand.
- Follow safe operating procedures for generators. Never use a generator inside a home, garage, or crawl space, or anywhere exhaust fumes can enter enclosed spaces. Never connect a generator to your home's circuits. Plug appliances directly into the generator.
- If using portable stoves, kerosene heaters, or lanterns, make sure that the area is sufficiently ventilated.
- Never use your car as a heating source in a closed garage.
- Never use an oven as a source of heating.
- Use flashlights instead of candles to reduce the risk of fire. Never place a burning candle near anything that could catch fire or leave one unattended. Extinguish candles before going to sleep.

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- If your pipes freeze, remove any insulation and wrap pipes in rags. Completely open all faucets and pour hot water over the pipes, starting where they were most exposed to the cold (or where the cold was most likely to penetrate).
- If your power goes out, report your outage immediately to your local electric company. Don't rely on your neighbors to report your outage.
- Stay away from downed or sagging power lines, flooded areas, and debris. Treat all fallen wires and anything touching them as though they are energized. Immediately report downed lines to your electric company.

## After the Storm

- Stay indoors, if possible.
- Make sure the storm has completely passed before going outside.
- Wear warm, dry, loose-fitting, lightweight clothing in several layers.
- If you must go outside, walk carefully on snowy or icy walkways.
- If you must drive, check the latest traffic and transit conditions. Use major streets or highways for travel whenever possible as these roadways will be cleared first. Drive slowly. Vehicles, including those with 4-wheel drive, take longer to stop on snow and ice than on dry pavement.
- Help protect line workers and crews when you see them on the roadside making emergency repairs. Move over from the lane nearest the workers or slow down. Please do not approach workers, and please remember the importance of social distancing so our mission-essential workers can continue to work safely.
- Avoid overexertion when shoveling snow. Overexertion can bring on a heart attack—a major cause of death in the winter. If you must shovel snow, stretch before going outside.
- Turn off all appliances, including your furnace, space heaters, water heater, and water pump. Leave on one lamp to know when power has been restored. That way, you can avoid a circuit overload and another outage that may result when power is restored to all appliances at once.
- Keep freezer and refrigerator doors closed. Food will stay frozen for 36 to 48 hours in a fully loaded freezer if you keep the door closed. A half-full freezer will generally keep food frozen for 24 hours.
- Listen to your battery-operated radio for regular news and weather updates.
- Open your blinds during the day, cover windows with drapes at night, avoid alcoholic beverages, and gather in a central room where there is an alternative heat source, such as a fireplace or kerosene space heater. If the indoor temperature drops to 55°F or below, open your faucets slightly so they constantly drip to prevent pipes from freezing.
- Remain patient. Every electric company has a detailed plan for restoring electricity after a power outage. Typically, one of the first steps a company takes—to prevent injuries and fires—is to make sure that power is no longer flowing through downed lines. Restoration then proceeds based on established priorities, which you can learn about on EEI's Web site, [www.eei.org](http://www.eei.org).

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Source: [www.Ready.gov](http://www.Ready.gov), a Web site operated by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)