



Virginia Department of Emergency Management

News Release

Get Ready Now for Winter Weather -- Winter Preparedness Week is Nov. 30-Dec. 6 --

RICHMOND, VA - Virginia is overdue for a major statewide winter storm, and citizens should get ready now for the upcoming snow and ice season.

"It's been eight years since we've had a big winter storm, which is a long time even by Virginia standards," said Michael Cline, state coordinator for the Virginia Department of Emergency Management. "It's critical that every family get ready for winter dangers such as power outages and slippery roads."

Winter Preparedness Week is Nov. 30-Dec. 6. Virginians can find winter-specific safety information and related links at www.ReadyVirginia.gov.

"This winter's forecast is for near normal precipitation, some of which is likely to be snow or ice," said Bill Sammler, warning coordination meteorologist for the NWS in Wakefield. "Use Winter Preparedness Week as a time to get ready for possible severe weather and to ensure your family's safety."

Simple steps to becoming winter ready include getting emergency supplies, making a communications plan, and staying informed about local conditions.

- Get a kit. Emergency supplies for winter weather include essential items to last at least three days in case of power outage. At a minimum, these supplies include a battery-powered radio and extra batteries, food and water, flashlights and extra batteries, a first aid kit, blankets and warm clothing, medications if needed and pet supplies.
- Make a plan. A family communications plan means discussing with your family what you would do in case of severe winter weather in your area. Decide on a meeting place if your family cannot return home because of closed roads. Choose an out-of-town friend or relative as a point-of-contact for family members. Always tell someone before you travel on snowy or icy roads where you are going and when you expect to arrive.
- Stay informed. Before, during and after a winter storm, it is critical that you stay informed of conditions by listening to reports from media and emergency officials who are closest to you. Local media will give instructions from local, state and federal agencies including road conditions, winter storm watches and warnings, and power outages.

Some additional winter safety tips include:

- Plug space heaters directly into wall sockets, not extension cords. Keep them at least three feet from other objects. Never leave space heaters unattended.

- Install a smoke detector in every bedroom and one on every level of your home. Check the batteries monthly, and replace them once a year at the same time every year.
- Make sure that outdoor pets have adequate shelter, unfrozen water and food.
- Driving is most dangerous when the temperature is at or under 32° F. If the road is wet, it could be icy, especially on bridges and curves. For road conditions call 511 or go to www.511Virginia.org.
- Even after roads have been treated with salt and/or sand, drivers should slow down. Leave a safe distance between vehicles, and never use cruise control in winter weather conditions.
- If your household includes someone with special needs (has a disability, requires electricity to operate home medical equipment, needs to go to dialysis, etc.) call your local emergency management office to let them know what you would need during an emergency. Many offices compile such information so they will know where the critical needs may be in the community during an emergency.

For more winter tips go to www.ReadyVirginia.gov. The Ready Virginia campaign is a statewide effort to provide vital preparedness information to citizens. Several agencies and organizations have joined together under the Ready Virginia banner, including the Virginia departments of Emergency Management, Fire Programs, Social Services and Transportation, as well as the American Red Cross and the National Weather Service. Information includes heating safety, generator safety, fire safety tips, winter driving guidelines, types of winter weather advisories and how to respond to them, winter preparedness information for kids, and the VDSS energy assistance program for low-income Virginians.

Additional information is available from these Ready Virginia partners and Web sites:

- VDEM:
Laura Southard, (804) 897-6510
<http://www.vaemergency.com>
- VDFP:
Mark Buff, (804) 371-0220
<http://www.vafire.com>
- VDSS:
Marianne McGhee, (804) 726-7105
<http://www.dss.virginia.gov>
- VDOT:
Jeff Caldwell, (804) 786-2715
<http://www.VirginiaDOT.org>
- American Red Cross:
Bill Harrison, (804) 780-2256
<http://www.redcross.org>
- NOAA/National Weather Service:
Wakefield: Bill Sammler, (757) 899-5732, <http://www.weather.gov/akq>
Sterling: Chris Strong, (703) 260-0209, <http://www.weather.gov/lwx>
Blacksburg: Phil Hysell, (540) 552-1613, <http://www.weather.gov/rnk>
Morristown, Tenn: Howard Waldron, (423) 586-3771, <http://www.srh.noaa.gov/mrx>
Charleston, V.Va.: Jason Franklin, (304) 746-0175, <http://www.weather.gov/rlx>