



Virginia Department of Emergency Management

## News Release

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### **Winter came early – were you ready?** *Winter Preparedness Week is Dec. 4-10*

**RICHMOND, Va.** – Old Man Winter paid an early visit to many Virginia communities at the end of October with snow accumulation and cold temperatures. The Virginia Department of Emergency Management and the National Weather Service remind Virginians that Winter Preparedness Week, Dec. 4-10, is a great opportunity to make a plan for handling severe winter weather.

“Making a plan is the most important thing that Virginians can do to ensure their family’s safety,” said Michael Cline, state coordinator of emergency management. “Making a plan doesn’t cost anything, and it can greatly reduce the potential loss of life and property during the winter months.”

Snow and ice storms can cause lengthy power outages, life-threatening low temperatures and dangerous road conditions. Injury and death from hypothermia, heart attack, stroke and traffic crashes are all too common during the winter season. Start emergency planning with a free family plan worksheet and an online fill-in version at <http://www.vaemergency.gov/readyvirginia/makeaplan>.

Being prepared to stay where you are until conditions improve is another important part of winter planning.

“Last winter’s severe weather caused power outages that shut down schools, offices and businesses,” said Bill Sammler, NWS Warning Coordination Meteorologist in Wakefield. “There’s always a good chance that every winter we will see severe weather somewhere in Virginia. Some years the snow and cold temperatures are widespread. So everyone, no matter where they live in Virginia, needs to be sure they are properly prepared for winter weather.”

#### **VDEM TIPS FOR WINTER WEATHER PREPAREDNESS**

- **Get a kit.** You’ll need emergency supplies on hand at home, in the car and at work.
  - For home, start with these basics: three days’ food and water; a battery-powered and/or hand-crank radio with extra batteries; and a family emergency plan. After getting these supplies, add a first aid kit, medications if needed, blankets and warm clothing, supplies for special members of your household, and pet items.

- For your car, start with some bottles of water and food bars; bag of sand or kitty litter to provide traction under tires; hats, gloves and blankets; and cell phone charger.
- For your office, have some bottles of water and food bars and a radio to hear local information about whether or not it is safe to travel. Officials may advise staying in place until it is safe to travel.
- **Make a plan.** Choose an out-of-town relative or friend to be your family's point of contact for emergency communications. Decide on a meeting place if your family cannot return home because of closed roads. Discuss with your family what you would do in case of severe winter weather in your area.
- **Stay informed.** Before, during and after a winter storm, listen for up-to-date information from your local media and emergency officials. Local media will give instructions from local, state and federal agencies that cover road conditions, winter storm watches and warnings, power outages and health information. Make sure your battery-powered radio is working and you have extra batteries in case the electricity goes out.

#### ADDITIONAL WINTER SAFETY TIPS

- Keep space heaters at least three feet from other objects. Never leave space heaters unattended. Install a smoke detector in every bedroom and on each level of your home. Check the batteries monthly, and replace them once a year at the same time every year.
- In case of power outages, use flashlights instead of candles for light.
- Use generators only outdoors and only in well ventilated areas.
- Make sure outdoor pets have adequate shelter, unfrozen water and food.
- 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 manager to let them know where you live and what you will need during an emergency.
- Driving is most dangerous when the temperature is at or under 32° F. If the road is wet, patches of ice are possible, especially on bridges and curves. Avoid using cruise control in winter weather conditions.
- Keep a safe distance of at least five seconds behind other vehicles and trucks that are plowing the road.
- Don't pass a snowplow or spreader unless it is absolutely necessary. Treat these as you would emergency response vehicles.
- Keep an emergency winter driving kit in your car.

For more on preparing for winter weather in Virginia, visit [www.ReadyVirginia.gov](http://www.ReadyVirginia.gov) and click on Stay Informed.

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