



Parenting

Winter emergencies

A storm can strand you and your kids at home or on the road. Here's how to be prepared **BY DANA SULLIVAN**

AT HOME

When you lose power or heat

- **The safest light source** is a battery-operated flashlight or lantern (kerosene lamps release toxic fumes when used indoors).
- **If you must use candles**, burn only one or two at a time. Never leave them unattended.
- **If there's no heat**, close the doors to any rooms you're not using to conserve warmth.
- **Don't leave a fire burning** in the fireplace overnight.
- **Never light** a charcoal or gas grill or a camping stove indoors.
- **You can use a portable generator** as long as it's outside. If you turn it on inside the garage, fumes can seep into the house.
- **Don't be tempted** to keep the oven door open for heat; it's a fire hazard. And gas ovens will also release fumes.

Essential supplies

Keep these in one place:

- High-energy food**—anything that doesn't need to be refrigerated or cooked, such as dried fruit, granola bars, cans of tuna (with a pop-top—or make sure you have a manual can opener)
- Formula/bottles, baby food**, if needed
- Diapers and wipes**, if your child needs them—enough for three days
- Water**—a gallon per person (including babies) per day, for at least three days
- Pet food**, if needed
- Waterproof matches**
- Flashlights**
- Battery-powered radio**
- Extra batteries** for flashlights, radio
- Telephone with a cord** (cordless phones require a working electrical outlet)
- Home fire extinguisher**
- Cash**—enough for a week's worth of groceries (plus coins for pay phones)



Safe walking

When the storm passes, you may not be able to drive.

- Never go walking at night—drivers may have a hard time seeing pedestrians.

- Be alert: Hats muffle the sound of oncoming traffic; snowdrifts do too, and they block signs and crosswalks from view.
- If the sidewalks are impassable and you

have to go into the street, walk where there's the most room and best views of traffic. Keep kids as close to the curb as you can.

- Wear bright colors, preferably reflective.

- Before stepping off the curb, make sure vehicles have come to a complete stop. A car that's almost stopped can still slide on snow—and, especially, on ice.

Too cold for your baby?

WARNING: A baby under age 1 can't maintain body heat well in a cold environment. So if the heat goes off at home, bundle up your baby and go to a friend's house or a motel. (Don't try to tough it out by staying or sleeping in an unheated house.)

ON THE ROAD



If you're stuck in the car

- **Stay inside, where you're sheltered.** Walking in stormy weather is particularly frightening for a child.
- **Keep the dome light on.** It uses very little battery power and makes it easier for rescuers to see you.
- **Tie a bright-colored cloth to your antenna,** or hang one from the top of a rolled-up window, to alert passersby that you're stuck. If you have a flare or a fluorescent triangle, now's the time to use it.
- **Run the car and use the heater** full blast for 10 minutes, then turn it off for the next 50; repeat every hour. But *check first* to make sure the exhaust pipe is clear of snow, ice, and mud. If it's not, poisonous fumes could seep inside when the car's running.
- **Use your cell phone for emergency calls only,** to preserve the battery. Make a brief call to family or friends to reassure them; let them make arrangements for you from a landline and call you back.

Preventing breakdowns

- **Perform winter maintenance.** It's best to take care of this in the fall, but do so now if you haven't done it yet: Have your belts and hoses, battery, radiator, and tires checked, either at a full-service gas station or by your own mechanic. (If you're a AAA member, a winter check is free at most AAA-approved auto-repair shops.)
- **Check antifreeze levels** each time you have the oil changed.
- **Make sure** you use windshield-wiper fluid that won't freeze.
- **Don't let the tank get near empty;** keep it at least half full at all times. That'll help maintain your fuel pump—and you'll have enough gas if you're caught in a storm.

A survival kit for your car

SEE AND BE SEEN

- Warning devices (either flares or triangles); flashlight with extra batteries

NAVIGATE

- Road maps, compass

DIG OUT

- Windshield scraper; collapsible shovel; bag of sand, salt, or kitty litter for traction on snow and ice (in a pinch, you can use the car's rubber floor mats)

FIX IT

- Jumper cables (though it's better for your car to wait for a tow); tool kit (work gloves, pliers, screwdriver); canned liquid sealant (such as "Fix-A-Flat")

STAY SAFE

- Blankets or sleeping bags (one for each family member), gloves, jackets, hats; bottled water, dried food; first-aid kit



Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Center for Environmental Health; Rolayne Fairclough, public affairs officer for AAA Utah; Rocky Lopes, manager of disaster education, American Red Cross; National Highway Traffic Safety Administration