



In advance of the winter season, the New York City Emergency Management Department reminds New Yorkers to protect themselves and help others who may be at risk during cold weather events. Cold weather can cause or worsen health problems. Certain individuals are at an increased risk for injuries, illness or death, such as those who drink heavily or use drugs and becomes incapacitated outdoors, are socially isolated, have limited mobility or are unable to leave the house, have chronic medical conditions, mental illness or developmental disabilities, and those with disabilities or access and functional needs. When traveling outdoors wear hats, scarves, gloves, layered clothing and keep fingertips, earlobes, and noses covered. To learn more about winter weather safety, visit the Health Department's interactive [online infographic](#).

Prolonged exposure to cold can lead to frostbite – which often results in red and painful or pale skin – and hypothermia. Symptoms of hypothermia include:

- Intense shivering
- Dizziness
- Trouble speaking
- Lack of coordination
- Sluggishness or drowsiness
- Confusion
- Shallow breathing

If you see symptoms of hypothermia or frostbite, call 911 and follow instructions, or go to the emergency room.

Safety Tips

During winter emergencies, New Yorkers are also encouraged to check on neighbors, friends, and relatives. Please take the following precautions:

- Stay indoors as much as possible.
- If you have to go outdoors, wear dry, warm clothing and cover exposed skin. Keep fingertips, earlobes, and noses covered. Wear a hat, hood, scarf, and gloves.
- Shivering is an important first sign that the body is losing heat. Shivering is a signal to return indoors.
- Be careful when shoveling snow. Follow your doctor's advice if you have heart disease or high blood pressure. Cold weather puts an extra strain on the heart.
- Be safe at work. Workers who spend a lot of time outdoors are at risk for cold-related health impacts. If you are an employer, implement safe work practices, provide appropriate protective equipment, and train workers on how to stay safe during cold and winter weather.
- Exercise caution and avoid slippery surfaces; some ice may not be visible. Wear sturdy boots that provide traction to reduce slipping. Use handrails when using stairs.



- Stock up on pre-packaged foods and water so that you do not have to go out during wintry days.
- Have a Go-bag ready with important documents, insurance cards, ID and medications.
- Seniors should take extra care outdoors to avoid slips and falls.
- Have heightened awareness of cars, particularly when approaching or crossing intersections.
- Limit alcohol intake. Drinking alcohol may make you feel warmer but it causes your body to lose heat faster. Alcohol also impairs your judgment, which limits your ability to take appropriate precautions or remove yourself from a dangerously cold environment in time. As a result, alcohol actually increases your chances of hypothermia and frostbite.

For Motorists

- Use mass transit where possible. If you have to drive, drive slowly. Vehicles take longer to stop on snow and ice than on dry pavement.
- Four-wheel drive vehicles may make it easier to drive on snow-covered roads, but they do not stop quicker than other vehicles.
- Use major streets or highways for travel whenever possible.
- Know your vehicle's braking system. Vehicles with anti-lock brakes require a different braking technique than vehicles without anti-lock brakes in snowy conditions.
- If you are driving and begin to skid, ease your foot off the gas and steer in the direction you want the front of the car to go. Straighten the wheel when the car moves in the desired direction. If you have an anti-lock braking system (ABS), apply steady pressure to the brake pedal. Never pump the brakes on an ABS equipped vehicle.

New Yorkers should remember to be prepared:

- Make sure your [household disaster plan](#) is ready and all members of your household are familiar with how to contact one another in an emergency.
- Winterize your [Go Bag](#) by adding a blanket, warm socks and gloves.
- Your [emergency supply kit](#) should be fully-stocked to allow you to sustain yourself for up to three days without power, or in the event you are unable to travel far from home. You may wish to include additional items such as extra blankets, additional warm clothing, and a battery-operated NOAA Weather Radio to monitor weather conditions during a storm.
- Install and check batteries in smoke and carbon monoxide detectors.
- Make sure you have sufficient heating fuel; you may have difficulty obtaining fuel in the immediate aftermath of a bad storm.
- Service snow removal equipment, and have rock salt on hand to melt ice on walkways. Kitty litter can be used to generate temporary traction.

What to Do if You Lose Heat or Hot Water at Home

Residential building owners are legally required to maintain indoor temperatures at 68 degrees when the temperatures fall below 55 degrees outside during the day and a minimum of 62 degrees indoors overnight, regardless of outdoor temperatures. If an apartment lacks appropriate heat, a tenant should first attempt to notify the building owner, managing agent or superintendent. If heat is not restored, the tenant should register an official complaint via 311. Tenants can call 311, visit 311ONLINE at www.nyc.gov/311, or use the app 311Mobile (on Android and iOS devices) to file a complaint. Hearing-impaired tenants can register complaints via a Touchtone Device for the Deaf TDD at (212) 504-4115. The center is open 24-hours a day, seven-days a week.

The Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) will take measures to ensure that the building owner is complying with the law. This may include contacting the building's owner and/or sending an inspector to verify the complaint and issue a violation directing the owner to restore heat and hot water if appropriate. If the owner fails to comply and does not restore service, HPD may initiate repairs through its Emergency Repair Program and bill the landlord for the cost of the work. HPD may also initiate legal action against properties that are issued heat violations, and owners who incur multiple heat violations are subject to litigation seeking maximum litigation penalties and continued scrutiny on heat and other code deficiencies.

Take measures to trap existing warm air and safely stay warm until heat returns, including:

- Insulate your home as much as possible. Hang blankets over windows and doorways and stay in a well-insulated room while the heat is out.
- Dress warmly. Wear hats, scarves, gloves, and layered clothing.
- If you have a well-maintained working fireplace and use it for heat and light, be sure to keep the damper open for ventilation. Never use a fireplace without a screen.
- If the cold persists and your heat is not restored call family, neighbors, or friends to see if you can stay with them.
- Do not use your oven or fuel-burning space heaters to heat your home. These can release carbon monoxide, a deadly gas that you cannot see or smell.
- Open your faucets to a steady drip so pipes do not freeze.

Fire Safety

Improper use of portable heating equipment can lead to fire or dangerous levels of carbon monoxide. Take precautions to ensure you are heating your home safely.

- Make sure you have a working smoke/CO alarm in every room. Test them at least once a month and change the batteries twice a year.
- Use only portable heating equipment that is approved for indoor use. Space heaters are temporary heating devices and should only be used for a limited time each day.

- Keep combustible materials, including furniture, drapes, and carpeting at least three feet away from the heat source. Never drape clothes over a space heater to dry them.
- Never leave running space heaters unattended, especially around children. Always keep an eye on heating equipment. Turn it off when you are unable to closely monitor it.
- Plug space heaters directly into a wall outlet. Never use an extension cord or power strip. Do not plug anything else into the same outlet when the space heater is in use. Do not use space heaters with frayed or damaged cords.
- If you are going to use an electric blanket, only use one that is less than 10 years old from the date of purchase. Also avoid tucking the electric blanket in at the sides of the bed. Only purchase blankets with an automatic safety shut-off.

Prevent carbon monoxide poisoning:

- Carbon monoxide comes from the burning of fuel. Therefore, make sure all fuel-burning devices such as, furnaces, boilers, hot water heaters, and clothes dryers are properly vented to the outdoors and operating properly. If you are not sure, contact a professional to inspect and make necessary repairs.
- Make sure you have a working carbon monoxide alarm. Most homes and residential buildings in New York City are required by law to have carbon monoxide detectors installed near all sleeping areas. Owners are responsible for installing approved carbon monoxide alarms. Occupants are responsible for keeping and maintaining the carbon monoxide alarms in good repair.
- Keep fireplace chimneys clean and clear of debris.
- Never heat your home with a gas stove or oven, charcoal barbecue grill, kerosene, propane, or oil-burning heaters. Kerosene heaters and propane space heaters are illegal in New York City.
- The symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning are non-specific and include headache, nausea, vomiting, dizziness, sleepiness, trouble breathing, and loss of consciousness. Severe poisonings may result in permanent injury or death.

If a carbon monoxide detector goes off in your home get outside immediately and call 911. If you suspect carbon monoxide poisoning, get outside immediately and call 911. For more fire safety information, visit [FDNYsmart.org](https://www.fdnysmart.org).

For more safety tips, visit [NYC.gov/EmergencyManagement](https://www.nyc.gov/EmergencyManagement). New Yorkers are also encouraged to download the Notify NYC mobile App, which is available for free download from iTunes or Google Play. Notify NYC is the City's free emergency notification system. Through Notify NYC, New Yorkers can also receive phone calls, text messages, and/or email alerts about winter weather conditions and other emergencies. To learn more about the Notify NYC program or to sign up, visit [NYC.gov/NotifyNYC](https://www.nyc.gov/NotifyNYC) or call 311. You can also follow @NotifyNYC on Twitter.



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