Minnesota Department of Public Safety
Homeland Security and Emergency Management
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Winter Hazard Awareness Week 2026

Monday, Nov. 16: Winter weather overview

Monday covers winter storms and winter weather, including ice storms, blizzards, subzero temperatures, watches and warnings, and extreme cold.

- Stay ahead of winter weather by monitoring forecasts, watches and warnings from the National Weather Service.
- Winter storms can bring heavy, blowing snow, ice, dangerous cold and rapidly changing conditions that impact travel.
- A winter weather watch means hazardous winter weather is possible. A warning means dangerous weather is occurring or expected.
- Avoid unnecessary travel when conditions become dangerous and allow extra time when travel is necessary.
- Prepare for a storm by making sure you have emergency supplies both at home and in your vehicle.

Tuesday, Nov. 17: Outdoor winter safety

Tuesday covers ice safety, snowmobile safety, hypothermia and frostbite.

- Dress in loose, lightweight layers when spending time outside in the cold. Cover exposed skin and wear a hat, mittens and proper footwear.
- Limit time outdoors during extreme cold and check frequently on children and others who may be more vulnerable.
- Know the warning signs of frostbite and hypothermia. Cold-related illnesses can become serious quickly.
- No ice is ever completely safe. Ice thickness can vary significantly, even on the same body of water.
- Use extra caution during winter recreation and let someone know where you are going and when you expect to return.

Wednesday, Nov. 18: Winter fire safety

Wednesday covers winter and holiday fire safety, alternate heat sources, smoke alarms, cooking, candles and decorations.

- Keep anything that can burn at least three feet away from fireplaces, space heaters or other heating equipment.
- Turn off portable heaters when leaving a room or going to sleep.

- Have chimneys, fireplaces and other heating equipment inspected and maintained regularly.
- Install working smoke alarms on every level of your home and test them regularly.
- Use candles, holiday decorations and alternative heat sources safely, keeping them away from combustible materials.
- Cooking and heating equipment are common causes of residential fires, making fire prevention especially important during winter months.

Thursday, Nov. 19: Indoor winter safety

Thursday covers carbon monoxide, radon, mold and general home care.

- Carbon monoxide is a colorless, odorless and tasteless gas that can cause serious illness or death.
- Carbon monoxide can build up when fuels such as natural gas, propane, wood or gasoline do not burn completely.
- Install carbon monoxide alarms in your home and test them regularly.
- Never use grills, generators or other fuel-burning outdoor equipment inside a home, garage or other enclosed space.
- Know the symptoms of carbon monoxide exposure, which can include headache, dizziness, nausea, drowsiness and fatigue.
- Winter is also a good time to be aware of other indoor hazards such as radon, mold and ventilation concerns.

Friday, Nov. 20: Winter driving

Friday covers vehicle safety, snowplows, road conditions, 511, winter driving techniques and vehicle survival kits.

- Check weather forecasts and road conditions before leaving and adjust travel plans when conditions are dangerous.
- Slow down, increase following distance and allow additional time to reach your destination.
- Clear snow and ice from windows, lights and mirrors before driving.
- Give snowplows plenty of room and avoid driving into the snow cloud behind a plow.
- Keep a winter survival kit in your vehicle with supplies that could help if you become stranded.
- Use Minnesota's 511 system to check current road conditions before and during winter travel.