

Preparing for Winter Storms

By Catherine Jones On December 22, 2008 @ 12:02 pm In Health & Safety Best Practices

Are your workers ready for ice storms and other severe winter weather? Preparedness is key to getting through a winter storm with minimum danger and discomfort. To help your workers plan for winter weather emergencies, share these points with them:

Heat: How would you heat your home if the electricity went out? People die during winter storms when they try to use outdoor fuel-burning equipment indoors. The carbon monoxide created by burning fuel builds up in a poorly ventilated area and can kill the occupants without warning. You should only use a heating device designed for indoor use. You can keep your home warmer by closing off the rooms you don't need to use and huddling in the warmest room with all the blankets you can round up.

Light: If you're thinking of candles, that's another bad idea. Houses go up in flames during winter storms because of candles. Instead, make sure you have battery-operated lights, such as flashlights, and a good supply of batteries.

Communication: Keep a battery-operated radio in your home for emergencies. You also need a telephone that can be plugged directly into a telephone jack and that can operate without electricity. So if all you have are phones linked to cordless stations and answering machines, make sure you pick up a no-frills telephone to use in an emergency.

Food, Water and Medicine: A supply of clean drinking water and foods that can be eaten without cooking are important survival supplies in any season. If you have special needs such as medicine, keep enough on hand to get you through a few days of being stuck at home or in a shelter.

Neighbors: Keep an eye on your neighbors, particularly those who are elderly, caring for young children or living alone. Weather extremes are hardest on the old, the young and those in poor health, so help them to stay warm, dry, fed and cared for.

Heavy Work: Winter storms claim lives when people are trying to work in extraordinary circumstances. Shoveling snow or doing other heavy work in the cold weather can cause heart attacks for those in poor health or unaccustomed to such work. And operating chainsaws during disaster cleanup has proved fatal for persons without experience with these dangerous tools.

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