

WINTER PREPAREDNESS CHECKLIST

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1. Prepare your home for winter

- Take a “Map Your Neighborhood” workshop
- Join your local CERT Team!
- Clean out gutters
- Repair roof leaks. Check for missing, damaged or warped shingles and replace, as necessary.
- Clean gutters of any debris. Make sure downspouts extend away from the house by at least 5 feet to prevent flooding of the foundation and water damage.
- Check the gutters and downspouts for proper fastening, and re-secure if loose or sagging. The weight of blocked water can pull gutters off the house.
- Check for deteriorated flashing at the chimney, walls, and skylights and around vent pipes. Seal joints where water could penetrate, using roofing cement and a caulking gun.
- Ensure all outside vents and openings are covered to prevent insects, birds, and rodents from getting inside to nest in a warm place
- Remove tree branches that could fall on your house, fence or your neighbor's house.
- Check, maintain and repair heating equipment (including cords on portable space heaters)
- Clean or replace the air filter in your furnace
- Install or inspect carbon monoxide alarms
- Install or inspect smoke alarms
- Clean chimneys and wood burning stove pipes
- Purchase or inspect your multipurpose, dry-chemical fire extinguisher(s) and make sure everyone knows how to use it
- Flush hot water heater tank to remove sediment, and check the pressure relief valve to make sure it's in proper working order.
- Clean and dry patio furniture. Cover with a heavy tarp or store inside a shed or garage to protect it from the elements.
- Bring all seasonal tools inside and spray them with a coating of lightweight oil to prevent rust.
- Run lawnmower until out of gas. Store for winter.
- Clean leaves, dirt, and pine needles between the boards of wooden decks to thwart mold and mildew growth.
- Clean leaves and debris from courtyard and pool storm drains to prevent blockages.

2. Saving Energy

- Make sure fans are switched to the reverse or clockwise position, which will blow warm air down to the floor for enhanced energy efficiency and comfort.
- Insulate walls and attics, and caulk and weather-strip doors and windows.
- Wrap water pipes in your basement or crawl spaces with insulation sleeves to slow heat transfer.
- Consider an insulated blanket for your hot water heater.
- If you have a fireplace, keep the flue closed when you're not using it.
- Make sure your furniture isn't blocking your home's heating vents.
- Insulate the attic floor well to minimize the amount of heat rising through the attic from within the house.
- Install foam-insulating sheets behind outlets and switch plates on exterior walls to reduce outside airflow.

3. Preparing for a Major Winter Storm

- Listen to weather forecasts
- Check in with your neighbors (older people are more vulnerable in cold weather)
- Test your generator
- Make sure you have fuel for your generator
- Make sure your car has a full tank of gas
- Check to make sure you have fully charged batteries available (if different sizes)
- Adequate supply of pet food
- Supply of non-clumping cat litter or bag of sand to add traction on walkway or driveways
- Adequate supply of food and water for one week
- Adequate supply of medicines for one week
- First aid kit and manual
- Drinking water
- Canned/no-cooking required food (bread, crackers, dried fruits)
- Non-electric can opener
- Paper cups, plates, paper towels and plastic utensils
- Make sure you have a week's supply of Infant formula and diapers (if appropriate)
- Make sure to have on hand books, games, puzzles or other activities for children

4. When you lose power for more than a day

The primary hazards to avoid when using alternate sources for electricity, heating or cooking are carbon monoxide poisoning, electric shock and fire.

- Keep fire extinguishers on hand, and make sure everyone in your house knows how to use them. House fires pose an additional risk, as more people turn to alternate heating sources
- Never use a generator, grill, camp stove or other gasoline, propane, natural gas or charcoal-burning devices inside a home, garage, basement, crawlspace or any partially enclosed area.
- Install carbon monoxide alarms in central locations on every level of your home and outside sleeping areas to provide early warning of accumulating carbon monoxide.
- Use battery-powered flashlights or lanterns.
- Avoid using candles as these can lead to house fires, buy LED candles instead.
- If you do use candles, never leave lit candles alone.
- If the carbon monoxide alarm sounds, move quickly to a fresh air location outdoors or by an open window or door.

5. Food Safety

- If the power is out for less than 4 hours, then the food in your refrigerator and freezer will be safe to consume. While the power is out, keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible to keep food cold for longer.
- If the power is out for longer than 4 hours, follow the guidelines below:
 - For the Freezer section: A freezer that is half full will hold food safely for up to 24 hours. A full freezer will hold food safely for 48 hours. Do not open the freezer door if you can avoid it.
 - For the Refrigerated section: Pack milk, other dairy products, meat, fish, eggs, gravy, and spoilable leftovers into a cooler surrounded by ice. Inexpensive Styrofoam coolers are fine for this purpose.
 - Use a food thermometer to check the temperature of your food right before you cook or eat it. Throw away any food that has a temperature of more than 40 degrees Fahrenheit.

6. When it freezes

- Disconnect and drain all outside hoses. If possible, shut off outside water valves.
- Insulate outside pipes and facets with insulation or newspapers and plastic to avoid freezing.
- Keep a slow trickle of water flowing through faucets connected to pipes that run through unheated or unprotected spaces.
- Learn how to shut off water valves (in case a pipe bursts).
- Bring pets/companion animals inside during winter weather.
- Supply of non-clumping cat litter or bag of sand to add traction on walkways or driveways
- Use electric space heaters with automatic shut-off switches and non-glowing elements.
- Never place a space heater on top of furniture or near water.
- Never leave children unattended near a space heater.
- Avoid using extension cords to plug in your space heater.
- Keep heat sources at least 3 feet away from furniture and drapes.

7. After a storm

- Check on older neighbors and family members; assist as necessary.
- Do not touch fallen electrical wires. They may be live and could hurt or kill you.
- Avoid contact with overhead power lines during cleanup and other activities.

Preventing Chain Saw Injuries During Tree Removal After a Disaster

Each year, approximately 36,000 people are treated in hospital emergency departments for injuries from using chain saws. The potential risk of injury increases after major winter storms and other natural disasters, when chain saws are widely used to remove fallen or partially fallen trees and tree branches. It is best to have a chain saw operator who has training and experience in safe chain saw use and cutting techniques to fell and remove limbs from trees.

- Absolutely avoid contact with power lines until the lines are verified by PG&E as being de-energized.
- Take extra care in cutting “spring poles”: trees or branches that have gotten bent, twisted, hung up on, or caught under another object during a high wind.
- Be sure that bystanders are at a safe distance from cutting activities.
- Choose the proper size of chain saw to match the job, and include safety features such as a chain brake, front and rear hand guards, stop switch, chain catcher and a spark arrester.
- Wear the appropriate protective equipment, including hard hat, safety glasses, hearing protection, heavy work gloves, cut-resistant legwear (chain saw chaps) that extend from the waist to the top of the foot, and boots which cover the ankle.
- Always cut at waist level or below to ensure that you maintain secure control over the chain saw.
- If injury occurs, call 911 and apply direct pressure over site(s) of heavy bleeding; this act may save a life.

8. Prepare your car for winter

Check or have a mechanic check the following items on your car:

- Antifreeze levels - ensure they are sufficient to avoid freezing.
- Battery and ignition system - should be in top condition and battery terminals should be clean.
- Brakes - check for wear and fluid levels.
- Heater and defroster - ensure they work properly.
- Lights and flashing hazard lights - check for serviceability.
- Thermostat - ensure it works properly.
- Windshield wiper equipment - repair any problems and maintain proper washer fluid level.
- Install good tires - Make sure the tires have adequate tread. All-weather radials are usually adequate for most winter conditions.

9. Traveling in Winter

Have an emergency kit in your vehicle with:

- adequate clothing and blankets to keep you warm
- flashlight
- battery powered radio
- extra batteries
- water
- non perishable snack food
- first aid kit with pocket knife
- tow chain or rope
- booster cables
- emergency flares
- fluorescent distress flag
- a shovel
- a chainsaw

10. Traveling during a major storm

- Don't drive during a storm if you can avoid it
- Take fully charged cell phone with chargers, inverter or solar charger
- If you must travel, let someone know your destination and when you expect to arrive. Ask them to notify authorities if you are late.
- Never pour water on your windshield to remove ice or snow; shattering may occur.
- Don't rely on a car to provide sufficient heat; the car may break down.
- Always carry additional warm clothing appropriate for the winter conditions.

11. Downed Power Lines

- Never touch a fallen power line. Call the power company to report fallen power lines.
- Do not drive through standing water if downed power lines are in the water.
- If a power line falls across your car while you are driving, stay inside the vehicle and continue to drive away from the line. Call 911. If the engine stalls, do not turn off the ignition. Warn people not to touch the car or the line. Do not allow anyone other than emergency personnel to approach your vehicle.
- The only circumstance in which you should consider leaving a car that is in contact with a downed power line is if the vehicle catches on fire. Open the door. Do not step out of the car. You may receive a shock. Instead, jump free of the car so that your body clears the vehicle before touching the ground. Once you clear the car, **shuffle** at least 50 feet away, with both feet on the ground to stay grounded until you are far enough away.
- As in all power line related emergencies, call for help immediately by dialing 911 or call your electric utility company's Service Center/Dispatch Office.
- Do not try to help someone else from the car while you are standing on the ground.

If you believe someone has been electrocuted take the following steps:

- Look first. Don't touch. The person may still be in contact with the electrical source. Touching the person may pass the current through you.
- Call or have someone else call 911 or emergency medical help.