

Winter weather brings a variety of hazards including treacherous driving conditions, extreme cold, and snow accumulation and drifting. The build-up of snow or ice around buildings can interfere with safe passage from a home, as well as compromise the function of mechanical equipment.

Exits, Pathways and Safe Areas:

Snow and ice should not obstruct any exits from buildings; this includes the pathways from emergency exits to the public way. It should be removed from building steps, the areas around exits, and routes of travel from exits to the safe area. Keeping the safe area clear of snow is essential to provide for a safe waiting place when emergency response vehicles arrive. Snow and ice removal should include clearing any seating areas that are in the site evacuation plan.

Vents, Utilities and Mechanical Equipment:

Keeping vents to mechanical equipment clear of snow and ice accumulation is an additional safety concern. When clearing snow from walkways and safe areas, it is important to consider where the snow will be deposited. Piling snow against buildings can obstruct or damage vents for boilers, furnaces, hot water tanks, and clothes dryers which can cause the appliance to not operate properly or even shut-down completely. If the unit operates improperly, it could emit poisonous carbon monoxide gas. Utility equipment such as gas meters and electrical service should also be kept clear and accessible to avoid natural gas seeping back into the building. Gently clear away snow from the meter using a plastic shovel or broom.

Additional Winter Safety Alerts are available at:

http://www.opwdd.ny.gov/opwdd_resources/safety_alerts/health_and_safety_alerts/winter-weather

Information on Fire Safety:

http://www.opwdd.ny.gov/opwdd_careers_training/training_opportunities/resources_for_providers_and_instructors/training_curricula/fire_safety

Additional resources on winter weather and preparedness are available from the NYS Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services at:

<http://www.dhses.ny.gov/oem/safety-info/publicsafety/winter.cfm> or FEMA:

<http://www.ready.gov/winter-weather>

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