



Winter weather can include a variety of conditions including ice, snow, frigid temperatures, and blowing snow. In order to be ready for winter weather, it is critical to prepare in advance. The health and safety of direct support professionals and the individuals we serve depends on each agency and program being prepared for winter weather and the hazards it can bring.

### Weather Forecast:

If a storm is coming or cold temperatures are predicted, stay inside when possible. Be aware of the wind chill factor which can decrease temperatures dramatically. Other considerations:

- Walk carefully: Sidewalks and driveways may be icy.
- Wear appropriate outdoor clothing: layers of light warm clothing, mittens, hats, scarves, and waterproof boots. Ensure that the people we support have adequate winter clothing and footwear.
- Keep dry: Wet clothing will cause you to lose body heat quickly.

### Prevention of Cold Injuries:

Ensure direct support professionals and individuals are aware of the signs of frostbite. These include loss of feeling and white or pale appearance in extremities. For individuals with limited mobility or decreased circulation, frostbite is a real hazard. If you observe signs of frostbite, get medical help immediately, call 911.

Direct support professionals and individuals should also know about the signs and symptoms of hypothermia. They include uncontrollable shivering, memory loss, disorientation, incoherence, slurred speech, drowsiness and apparent exhaustion. If hypothermia is suspected:

- Get the person out of the cold immediately
- Remove wet clothing
- Use dry clothing and blankets to warm the person
- Warm the center of the body first
- Get medical help as soon as possible
- Give warm, non-alcoholic beverages if possible
- Call 911

**Emergency Supplies:**

Stock the following supplies in the event a winter storm or power outage prevents you from leaving your home:

- Flashlights/Battery operated lanterns
- Battery-operated or hand crank radio
- Extra batteries
- A supply of non-perishable foods
- Non-electric can opener
- Bottled water
- One-week supply of medicines
- Extra blankets or sleeping bags
- First aid kit and manual
- Fire extinguisher

**Travel:**

Avoid traveling alone when possible. Carry a fully charged cell phone so you can call for help if needed. Keep a flashlight, extra blanket and snow brush in the vehicle during cold weather.

**Clearing Snow:**

Make sure walking and driving surfaces are kept clear from snow and ice. All exit doors and pathways shall be kept clear of snow and ice so that egress will not be affected in the event of an emergency.

- When shoveling make sure to take frequent breaks as needed.
- Wear appropriate clothing for the weather conditions
- Stay hydrated
- Clear areas multiple times during the storm, rather than all at once.
- Apply your ice melts to your surfaces
- Use appropriate posture when shoveling to avoid back injuries
- Make sure you clear all vents

**Additional resources on winter weather and preparedness are available from  
NYALERT at: <http://www.nyalert.gov/> 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>**