

Red Cross Safety Tips Blizzard of 2015



As we brace for a major winter storm, I wanted to remind you of some important information that will help you weather the storm and safely clean up after it departs. As always, Red Cross volunteers are preparing to respond in our community. Please feel free to share the following with relatives, friends, coworkers and anyone else in the community:

- **Assemble an Emergency Preparedness Kit:** Pack a winter-specific supply kit that includes a warm coat, hat, mittens or gloves, and water-resistant boots, along with extra blankets and extra warm clothing for each family member. Sand or non-clumping cat litter is good to have on hand to help make walkways or steps less slippery. Additionally, make sure you have a first aid kit and a supply of essential medications, canned food and can opener, bottled water, flashlights and a battery-powered radio with extra batteries in your home in the event of a power outage.
- **Heed Storm Warnings:** A **Blizzard Warning** is

issued for winter storms with sustained or frequent winds of 35 mph or higher with considerable falling and/or blowing snow that frequently reduces visibility to 1/4 of a mile or less. These conditions are expected to prevail for a minimum of 3 hours. A **Winter Storm WARNING** means that life-threatening, severe winter conditions have begun or will begin within 24 hours. Individuals in a warning area should take precautions immediately. Stay tuned to local media to keep up with forecasts and additional warnings.

- **Use Caution Clearing Snow:** Shoveling snow is strenuous work; take the task slow and easy to guard against over-exertion or back injury. Take regular breaks. If using a snow thrower, keep hands and feet clear of moving parts. Always turn off your snow thrower and use a stick or other implement to clear blockages, never use your hands. **If there is a fire hydrant on your property, clear snow around the hydrant so it is accessible in the event of a fire.**
- **Tips for Home and Car:** Winterize your vehicle and keep the gas tank full, which will help to keep the fuel line from freezing. When the storm has passed, completely clear snow from all surfaces of your vehicle. It's safer for you and other drivers and it's the law in Connecticut. Be sure to keep furnace and gas dryer vents outside your home clear of snow to avoid the risk of Carbon Monoxide poisoning. If you lose power and heat, running water at a trickle from a faucet helps to prevent pipes from freezing.
- **Use Generators Safely:** Never operate a generator inside homes, garages, basements, crawl spaces, sheds or other partially enclosed spaces, even if using a fan or opening doors and windows. Carbon Monoxide (CO) can quickly build up in these spaces and linger for hours after a generator is shut down. Place your generator outside, well away from

windows, doors and vents. Shut down the generator before refueling it. If you begin to feel sick, dizzy or weak while using a portable generator, shut it off and get to fresh air immediately. You could have CO poisoning.

- **Use Care When Outdoors in the Cold:** Dress in light layers so you can adapt to temperatures. Wear a hat; most of your body heat is lost through your head. Mittens are warmer than gloves. Wear insulated, waterproof footwear. Recognize the symptoms of hypothermia that can be a serious medical condition: confusion, dizziness, exhaustion and severe shivering. Seek medical attention immediately if you have these symptoms. Recognize frostbite warning signs: gray, white or yellow skin discoloration, numbness, waxy feeling skin. Seek medical attention immediately if you have these symptoms.
- **If Sheltering in Place:** Travel may be difficult and public officials may have released travel bans. Be sure to finalize all preparations with a full disaster supply kit at home, including items such as fresh batteries, prescription medications and plenty of food and water for you and your pets. Also remember to charge your cell phones ahead of the storm.
- **Use Technology to Prepare and Stay Safe:** Download Red Cross preparedness apps for your smartphone. Our free apps have tips and real-time information to help you prepare, as well as tools to help you keep in touch during and after a major storm. In particular, the First Aid App has a special section devoted to severe winter weather with preparedness tips and information about coping during and after the storm. Get the apps for iPhones or Android phones at www.redcross.org/mobileapps

HOW TO HELP : You can always help by making a donation by visiting www.redcross.org , calling 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767) or texting the word REDCROSS to 90999 to make a \$10 donation. Contributions may also be sent to the local Red Cross chapter or to the American Red Cross, P.O. Box 37243, Washington, DC 20013.

Sincerely,



Mario J. Bruno, CEO
Connecticut and Rhode Island Region