

# Preparing for Cold and Winter Weather



Stay Safe and Healthy

**Every winter in New York City (NYC), people get sick, injured and even die from extreme cold temperatures and winter storms. Spending time in the cold – indoors and outdoors – can be dangerous, especially for people who:**

- Are homeless
- Drink heavily or use drugs
- Live in a home without heat and
  - ◆ Are older
  - ◆ Are infants
  - ◆ Have certain medical conditions (i.e., heart or lung disease, high blood pressure, diabetes)
  - ◆ Have mental health conditions or developmental disabilities
  - ◆ Have physical disabilities or trouble leaving the home

**Prepare for the cold and winter weather before it arrives to stay safe and healthy throughout the season.**

- Check that carbon monoxide detectors and smoke alarms are working.
- Make sure you have warm clothing you can layer, as well as gloves, a hat and sturdy shoes and/or boots.
- Talk to your at-risk friends and family and make a plan to support them when the weather turns cold.
- Review the signs and symptoms of hypothermia and frostbite so that you can identify them quickly and know when to call 911.



## Stay Safe Indoors

**Prevent fires and carbon monoxide poisoning. Change batteries in carbon monoxide detectors and smoke alarms when daylight savings time ends in the fall.**

Check that they are installed:

- In areas where people sleep
- On each floor of your home
- In the home near the entrance to attached garages
- Within 10 feet of boiler rooms

## Take these steps if you do not have heat or hot water.

- Tell your building superintendent, property manager or owner right away. Call 311 if the problem is not fixed quickly.
- Go to a warm place, such as a friend's or family member's home. If you stay at home, wear layers of dry, loose-fitting clothing.

### Need help with your heating bills?

Call 311—you may qualify for the Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP).

## Until your heat is fixed, heat your home safely.

- Never use a stove, oven or charcoal grill to heat your home. Kerosene heaters and propane space heaters are illegal in NYC.
- If you use an electric space heater, only plug it directly into the wall outlet.
- Unplug space heaters when you leave the room or go to sleep.
- Place space heaters at least three feet away from anything that can catch fire, such as curtains or tablecloths. Do not hang clothes over a space heater to dry.

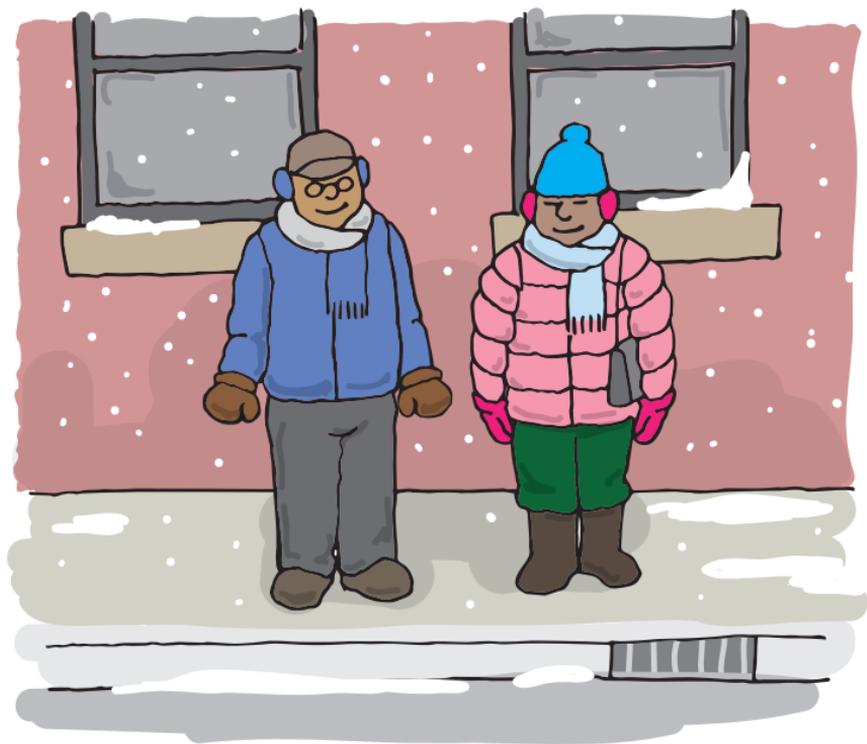
## **Stay safe in the garage and car.**

- Never run your car inside the garage. Carbon monoxide can build up inside your car and the garage.
- Avoid driving in dangerous weather. If you must drive, keep a shovel, ice scraper, flashlight, jumper cables, blankets and first aid kit in your car in case of an emergency.

## **Prevent sleep-related infant deaths.**

### **Keep your baby safe and warm.**

- Never sleep with your baby. Put your baby to sleep alone in a crib.
  - ◆ Call 311 to see if you are eligible for a free crib.
- Dress your baby in warm layers.
- Use a flannel fitted crib sheet.
- If you need to use a blanket, place your baby with their feet at the end of the crib and tuck the blanket edges under the mattress. Cover your baby no higher than chest level. Always keep the blanket away from your baby's face to prevent suffocation.



## Stay Safe Outdoors

### Keep warm.

- Dress in dry, loose-fitting layers.
- Cover exposed skin, such as your face and hands.

### Prevent slips and falls.

Take care when walking on snow and ice, especially if you are an older adult.

- Wear sturdy shoes or boots.
- Take short steps and walk at a slow pace.
- Use handrails on stairs.

## **Be careful when shoveling snow.**

- In NYC, homeowners are responsible for shoveling snow. Shovel slowly and take breaks often.
- If you are an older adult or have a disability and need snow shoveled, call 311 and ask if volunteer snow removal services are available in your neighborhood.
- Clear snow and ice from your car's tailpipe, as carbon monoxide can build up inside your car.

## **Watch for signs of hypothermia and frostbite.**

Hypothermia and frostbite are serious conditions caused by spending long periods of time in very cold temperatures.

Hypothermia is when your body temperature drops to a dangerously low level. It can lead to death. Symptoms include:

- Intense shivering
- Sluggishness
- Dizziness
- Drowsiness
- Trouble speaking
- Confusion
- Lack of coordination
- Shallow breathing

Frostbite is when parts of the body freeze, especially your fingers, toes, ears, nose and cheeks. It can cause permanent damage. Symptoms include:

- Red and painful skin or pale skin
- Unusually firm or waxy skin
- Numbness

Call 911 or go to the emergency room right away if you see symptoms of hypothermia or frostbite.



## Be a Buddy!

Get to know your neighbors. In an emergency, people who live nearby can respond faster than anyone else.

### When it's very cold:

- Check on family, friends and neighbors — especially older adults or people with disabilities — to make sure they are safe inside and have heat.
- Call 311 for help getting a homeless person to a shelter.
- Call 911 if you see signs of hypothermia or frostbite.