

SOUTH CAROLINA WINTER WEATHER

Cold Weather Hazards in South Carolina: Your Winter Prep Checklist



SCEMD

A winter weather resource guide from the
South Carolina Emergency Management Division and the State Emergency Response Team.

WINTER WEATHER: KNOW THE TERMS

Winter Storm Watch is used when the risk of a hazardous winter weather event has increased but its occurrence, location, and/or timing is still uncertain (heavy sleet, heavy snow, ice storm, heavy snow, blowing snow, or a combination of events).

Winter Storm Warning is issued for a significant winter weather event, including snow, ice, sleet, blowing snow, or a combination of these hazards.

Winter Weather Advisory is issued when snow, blowing snow, ice, sleet, or a combination of these wintry elements is expected, but conditions should not be hazardous enough to meet warning criteria.

Ice Storm Warning is usually issued for ice accumulation of around 1/4 inch or more. This amount of ice accumulation will make travel dangerous or impossible, likely leading to snapped power lines and falling tree branches.

Freezing Rain is rain that freezes when it hits the ground, creating a coating of ice on roads, walkways, trees, and power lines.

Sleet is rain that turns to ice pellets before reaching the ground. Sleet can create dangerous driving conditions.

Freeze Warning freezing temperatures for an extended period are expected.

Extreme Cold Warning dangerously cold air temperatures or wind chill values are expected or occurring. Avoid going outside if possible.

Extreme Cold Watch dangerously cold air temperatures or wind chill values are possible.

Cold Weather Advisory issued when cold temperatures/wind chill temperatures are expected to result in significant impacts to people and/or infrastructure.

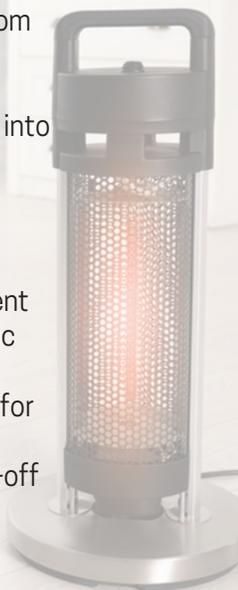
POWER POINTERS:

- Keep a supply of blankets, warm clothing, and sleeping bags to stay warm.
- Use a battery-powered or hand-cranked radio for weather updates and emergency information.
- If you have a generator, use it only outdoors in a well-ventilated area, away from windows and doors.
- Conserve phone battery by limiting use or using a portable charger.
- Ensure all food in the refrigerator and freezer stays cold by opening only when necessary.
- Check on neighbors, especially the elderly or those with medical needs.



SPACE HEATER SAFETY TIPS:

- Keep heaters at least 3 feet away from anything that can burn (furniture, curtains, bedding, etc.).
- Always plug electric heaters directly into a wall outlet—no extension cords or power strips.
- Never leave a space heater on while sleeping or out of the room.
- Place on a flat, hard surface to prevent tipping. Avoid carpets and high-traffic areas.
- Ensure you are using the proper fuel for the type of heater.
- Use heaters with an automatic shut-off in case of tipping or overheating.
- Unplug the heater when not in use.



BEFORE A WINTER STORM:

- Add rock salt and shovels to your supply kit.
- Pet Safety: opt for ice melt products labeled “pet-safe.” Avoid rock salt (sodium chloride) and antifreeze as these can be harmful to pets.
- Stock up on heating fuel for potential isolation or power loss.
- Insulate pipes and let faucets drip to prevent freezing.
- Learn how to shut off water valves in case a pipe bursts.
- Service your vehicle for winter readiness.
- Keep a winter emergency kit in each vehicle, including a shovel, scraper, flashlight, radio, batteries, water, snacks, matches, extra clothing, a first aid kit, meds, blankets, tow chain, salt, booster cables, flares, and a distress flag.

PREPARING YOUR HOME FOR WINTER WEATHER:

- Seal gaps around windows and doors to prevent drafts and heat loss.
- Clean and inspect gutters to prevent ice dams and water damage.
- Check and replace weatherstripping on doors and windows.
- Insulate pipes in unheated areas to prevent freezing.
- Stock up on winter supplies like salt, shovels, and blankets.
- Test smoke and carbon monoxide alarms to ensure they're working.



AFTER A WINTER STORM:

- Listen to local radio or TV for weather and traffic updates.
- Go to a designated shelter if your home loses power or heat during periods of extreme cold.
- Check on your animals and ensure that snowdrifts, ice, or other obstacles do not block their access to food and water. If possible, bring them indoors.
- If alternative electricity, heating, or cooking sources are used, be aware of possible carbon monoxide poisoning, electric shock, and fire.

HERE IN SOUTH CAROLINA:

- State Government Closings and Delays: Updated schedules for state government offices will be broadcast via SCETV and posted on scemd.org/closings.
- Monitor local media for information regarding all other winter closings: schools, municipal governments, and businesses.



INSTEAD OF MILK & BREAD:

- **Stock non-perishables:** canned goods, pasta, rice, and shelf-stable milk.
- **Freeze meals:** Prepare and freeze soups or casseroles for easy reheating.
- **Store water:** At least 2 gallons per person per day for at least 3 days.
- **Plan for power outages:** Have a manual can opener and alternative cooking methods.
- **Limit fresh foods:** Use fresh produce quickly or freeze it.

DURING A WINTER STORM:

- Stay indoors. If you go out, dress in layers: a scarf and waterproof insulated boots.
- Avoid overexertion when shoveling snow; stretch before and take plenty of breaks.
- Change wet clothing to prevent heat loss.
- Watch for signs of frostbite, such as the loss of feeling and white or pale appearance in extremities such as fingers, toes, earlobes, and the tip of your nose.
- Only drive if necessary. If you must, travel during the day and never alone, if possible. When driving on icy roads, drive slowly, brake softly, and increase your following distance.
- Allow time for car windows to defrost and remove ice/snow completely before driving.
- Remember, SCDOT will address major roadways first, which means driving on less-traveled roadways will likely require extreme caution for longer periods of time.
- If trapped in a winter storm, stay in your car with the hazard lights on. Run the engine for 10 minutes per hour to warm up, but keep the exhaust pipe clear.

Get real-time road conditions by dialing 511 or visiting 511sc.org online.

BELIEVE IT OR NOT:

- Snow and ice storms and cold temperatures periodically threaten South Carolina.
- In February 2014, there were more than 364,000 power outages statewide, which caused more than 550 people to need emergency shelter and caused more than \$260 million in damages.
- Over the last 20 years, the 2004, 2006, and 2014 ice storms caused some of the most significant presidential disaster declarations.



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