



Let's get ready for
winter



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Winter can be a great time of year but sometimes wintry conditions can disrupt our daily lives.

This guide outlines a few simple steps to prepare for winter and has some useful contact information should you need them.

Keeping warm at home during the day

During the winter months people die as a result of being too cold in their own home. Cold homes have a significant impact on people's health.

One of the best ways of keeping well during winter is to stay warm. To keep warm at home during the day try to:

- Heat your main living room to around 18-21°C (64-70°F) and the rest of the house to at least 16°C (61°F).
- If you have central heating set your heating to come on before you get up and switch off before you go to bed. In very cold weather set the heating to come on earlier, rather than turn the thermostat up, so you won't be cold while you wait for your home to heat up.
- Make sure that your radiators or portable heaters are not obstructed by curtains or furniture.
- Heat all the rooms you use in the day. Make sure you keep your living room warm throughout the day and heat your bedroom before going to bed.
- Keep curtains drawn and doors closed to block out draughts.
- Have regular hot drinks and at least one hot meal a day if possible. Eating regularly helps keep energy levels up during winter.
- Wear warm clothing, plenty of thin layers are better than one thick one.
- Keep as active as possible.
- Wrap up warm if you need to go outside on cold days, wear a coat, hat, scarf, gloves and warm shoes or boots with good grips on the soles.

TOP TIP:
Test boilers or heating systems before winter

Keeping warm at home during the night

- Try to keep the temperature above 18°C (65°F) in your bedroom overnight.
- If you use a fire or heater in your bedroom during winter open the window or door a little for ventilation.
- Use an electric blanket or a hot water bottle but never use them together as you could electrocute yourself.
- Check what type of electric blanket you have – some are designed only to warm the bed before you get in and should not be used throughout the night.
- Wear bed socks and thermal underwear at night.

Financial help for heating your home

You may be able to claim financial help with heating your home including:

- Winter fuel payment.
- Cold weather payment.
- Warm home discount scheme.
- To find out if you are eligible for financial assistance contact the Local Authority using the number at the back of this guide.

Keeping stocked up in Winter

As winter approaches it is not always easy to predict what the weather conditions will be from one day to the next, it may be a good idea to stock up on non-perishable items such as tinned food, nappies and baby milk just in case you are unable to go shopping.

If you use heating oil, Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) or solid fuel to heat your home make sure that you have a sufficient supply to see you through the winter period.



Keeping healthy in Winter

- Get your free flu jab. If you are 65 or over, pregnant, have certain medical conditions, live in a residential or nursing home or are the main carer for an older or disabled person you are eligible. Speak to your GP or healthcare provider for more information.
- Help prevent the spread of norovirus by maintaining good hand hygiene.
- Learn a few simple first aid techniques such as how to deal with strains, sprains or broken bones.

What to do if water pipes freeze or burst?

Water pipes and taps may freeze if they are exposed to freezing temperatures, if this does happen here are some simple steps to follow.

- 1) Turn off your main stop tap.
- 2) Protect everything around the pipe that appears to be frozen, this will avoid further damage if the pipe bursts.
- 3) Open the tap nearest to the frozen pipe to allow the melted water to flow out.
- 4) Thaw the pipe with a hot water bottle or progressively raise the temperature of the space using an electric heater placed above ground level and connected to a circuit breaker. Beginning at the tap end and working backwards towards the cold water tank. Never use a heat gun or naked flame.

If after thawing you discover that a pipe has burst turn off your stop tap and electricity supply immediately and contact a plumber for professional advice.

In preparation for an emergency know how to turn off your water, electricity and gas at the mains. If the stop tap has seized contact a plumber for assistance.

TOP TIP:
Insulate exposed
pipework

Helping other people

Some people really struggle to get out and about in wintry weather. If you can, try to help neighbours, family and friends with everyday essentials like trips to the shops or pharmacy etc.

Check that any elderly or disabled neighbours are ok in the cold weather. If you are worried about them, try contacting their relatives or friends or if necessary the Local Authority.

Clearing snow and ice

Anyone can clear snow and ice from the pavement outside their home or public spaces to prevent slips and falls. It is unlikely that you'll be sued or held responsible if someone is injured on a path or pavement if you've cleared it carefully. (www.direct.gov.uk)

- Clear the snow and ice early, it's easier to move fresh, loose snow.
- If you remove the top layer of snow in the morning, any sunshine during the day will help melt the ice beneath. You can then cover the path with salt before it freezes again.
- When you're shovelling snow, take care where you put it so it doesn't block people's paths or drains. Make a path down the middle of the area to be cleared first, so you have a clear surface to walk on.
- Pay extra attention to clearing snow and ice from steps and steep pathways, you might need to use more salt on these areas. Don't use water to melt the snow, it may refreeze and turn to black ice.
- You can melt snow or prevent black ice by spreading some salt on the area you have cleared. You can use ordinary table or dishwasher salt – a tablespoon for each square metre you clear should work. Be careful not to spread salt on plants or grass as it may damage them. If you don't have enough salt, you can also use sand or ash. These won't stop the path icing over as effectively as salt, but will provide good grip underfoot.
- Offer to clear your neighbour's paths and paths of the elderly. If your neighbour has difficulty getting in and out of their home, offer to clear snow and ice around their property as well.



Driving in poor weather conditions

Where possible it is best not to drive in poor weather conditions. However, some people have no choice and need to drive in bad weather; if this is the case the following tips will allow you to arrive safely.

Make sure your vehicle is prepared for winter, here are some basic tips (www.theaa.com):

- Check tyres for tread and pressure.
- Top up your antifreeze.
- Check battery.
- Ensure you have enough fuel.
- Check and clean lights regularly, carry spare bulbs.
- Keep windscreen clean inside and out.
- Use a good quality screenwash.
- Make sure you are equipped with warm clothing, food, a torch, a shovel, water, boots, a hazard warning triangle and a fully charged hands free mobile phone.

Driving on ice and slush

- Drive slowly using the highest gear possible to avoid wheel spin.
- Manoeuvre gently, avoid sudden braking or acceleration.
- When slowing down, get into a low gear as early as possible and allow your speed to reduce using the brake pedal gently.
- Leave plenty of room between you and the vehicle in front. Remember, in these conditions it can take 10 times longer to stop than on a dry road.

In difficult conditions

- Do not drive unless you absolutely need to.
- Check weather forecasts and travel information.
- If possible, tell someone when you expect to arrive.

Driving in fog

- Drive slowly using dipped headlights or fog lights.
- Do not drive too closely to the vehicle in front.
- Do not speed up if the fog suddenly lifts, it drifts rapidly and is often patchy.



If you get stuck in snow

- Switch on your hazard warning lights.
- Move the car slowly backwards and forwards out of the rut using the highest gear you can.
- Do not leave the vehicle unless you are in sight of a suitable destination. Let help come to you.
- Do not keep your engine running for warmth, there is a risk of carbon monoxide poisoning from the exhaust fumes.
- Put on warm clothing to avoid losing body heat.
- If you must abandon your vehicle, try to leave it out of the path of snow ploughs. Advise the police or the council where it is and how to contact you.

Driving on flooding roads is not advisable due to hidden dangers and speed of the water, however if you must make the journey:

- Stay in first gear and drive slowly.
- Slip the clutch to keep the engine speed higher than normal avoiding a stall.
- Where possible drive towards the middle of the road to avoid the deeper water at the edges.

Driving in winter sun

- Dazzle from the winter sun is an underestimated hazard, particularly from snow or wet roads. Carry sunglasses to help reduce the glare.

Keep a kit in your car for when you are going on long journeys:

- Warm clothes and blankets – for you and all passengers.
- Torch and spare batteries – or a wind up torch.
- Mobile phone and car charger.
- Boots, sunglasses and first aid kit.
- Jump leads, a shovel and a road atlas.



In addition, when setting out on long journeys remember to take with you:

- Food and a flask with a hot or cold drink depending on the season.
- Any medication you, or other people travelling with you need to take regularly.
- And tell someone that you are making the journey, give expected routes and arrival time.