

# HOW TO BE PREPARED AT HOME

## Severe Storms

### Blizzard



### What is a Blizzard?

- A blizzard, in general, is when winds of 40 km/h or greater are expected to cause widespread reductions in visibility to 400 metres or less, due to blowing snow, or blowing snow in combination with falling snow, for at least four hours.
- Blizzards come in on a wave of cold arctic air, bringing snow, bitter cold, high winds and poor visibility in blowing snow. While these conditions must last for at least four hours to be designated a blizzard, they may last for several days.
- Poor visibility, low temperatures and high winds combine to create a significant hazard.
- In Canada, blizzards with high winds are most common in the Prairies, eastern Arctic and eastern Ontario.
- Heavy snowfalls are most common in British Columbia, the Atlantic provinces, southern and eastern Quebec and areas around the Great Lakes.
- Freezing rain can occur pretty much anywhere in the country, but is particularly common in Ontario, Quebec and the Atlantic provinces.

### Before a Blizzard

- If a blizzard or heavy blowing snow is forecast, you may want to string a lifeline between your house and any outbuildings to which you may have to go during the storm.
- If you live on a farm, shelter animals. Generally, if the structure is sound, the animals should be placed indoors. Once they are inside, secure all openings to the outside. The sheltering should be ordered and completed before similar action is taken for humans. Water supplies should be checked for freezing. Many animals have died of thirst during the winter, even with abundant water sources, because they could not drink the water as it was frozen solid.



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## During a Blizzard

- When a winter storm hits, stay indoors. If you must go outside, dress for the weather. Outer clothing should be tightly woven and water-repellent. The jacket should have a hood. Wear mittens - they are warmer than gloves - and a hat, as large portion of body heat is lost through the head.
- In wide-open areas, visibility can be virtually zero during heavy blowing snow or a blizzard. You can easily lose your way. If a blizzard strikes, do not try to walk to another building unless there is a rope to guide you or something you can follow.
- If you must travel during a winter storm, do so during the day and let someone know your route and arrival time.
- If your car gets stuck in a blizzard or snowstorm, remain calm and stay in your car. Allow fresh air in your car by opening the window slightly on the sheltered side - away from the wind. You can run the car engine about 10 minutes every half-hour if the exhaust system is working well. Beware of exhaust fumes and check the exhaust pipe periodically to make sure it is not blocked with snow. Remember: you can't smell potentially fatal carbon monoxide fumes.
- To keep your hands and feet warm, exercise them periodically. In general, it is a good idea to keep moving to avoid falling asleep. If you do try to shovel the snow from around your car, avoid overexerting yourself.
- Overexertion in the bitter cold can cause death as a result of sweating or a heart attack.
- Keep watch for traffic or searchers.



## Hail Storm

### What is a hail storm?

- Hailstorms occur across Canada, though they are most frequent in Alberta, the southern Prairies and in southern Ontario.
- Hailstorms occur mostly from May to October.
- Parts of the Prairies can expect up to 10 hailstorms a year.
- For farmers whose crops are crushed, and for others whose homes and cars are damaged, a hailstorm can be a financial disaster.
- Some hailstones are the size of peas while others can be as big as grapefruits.

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## During a Hail Storm

- If hail is forecast, you may want to protect your vehicle by putting it in the garage.
- Take cover when hail begins to fall. Do not go out to cover plants, cars or garden furniture or to rescue animals. Hail comes down at great speed, especially when accompanied by high winds. Although no one in Canada has ever been killed by hail, people have been seriously injured by it.
- When a hailstorm hits, stay indoors, and keep yourself and your pets away from windows, glass doors and skylights which can shatter if hit by hailstones. Avoid using the telephone during a storm, and do not touch metal objects like stoves, radiators, metal pipes, and sinks.
- When a hailstorm hits, find shelter and avoid underpasses or any low lying areas that may flood.



## Ice Storm

### What is an ice storm?

- Freezing rain is tough, clings to everything it touches and is more slippery than snow.
- A little freezing rain is dangerous, a lot can be catastrophic.

## During an ice storm

- Ice from freezing rain accumulates on branches, power lines and buildings. If you must go outside when a significant amount of ice has accumulated, pay attention to branches or wires that could break from the weight of the ice and fall on you. Ice sheets could also do the same.
- Never touch power lines. A hanging power line could be charged (live) and you would run the risk of electrocution. Remember also that ice, branches or power lines can continue to break and fall for several hours after the end of the precipitation.
- When freezing rain is forecast, avoid driving. Even a small amount of freezing rain can make roads extremely slippery. Wait several hours after freezing rain ends so that road maintenance crews have enough time to spread sand or salt on icy roads.
- Rapid onsets of freezing rain combined with the risks of blizzards increase the chances for extreme hypothermia. If you live on a farm, move livestock promptly to shelter where feed is available. Forage is often temporarily inaccessible during and immediately after ice storms. Animal reactions to ice storms are similar to that of blizzards.