

# Tips for Cold Weather Survival



With Utah's frigid temperatures, it is essential to keep your family and pets safe from the cold. While we may not anticipate that the furnace could stop working or that the power could go out, these things are possible, so it's important to be prepared.

According to the Extension Disaster Education Network (EDEN), preparing for winter includes understanding weather-related terms, winterizing homes and vehicles, and protecting family members, pets, livestock, and neighbors. (See <https://extensiondisaster.net/hazard-resources/naturally-occurring/winter-weather/>.) Consider these tips to stay warm and safe this winter.

\* Prepare your vehicle. Ensure it is in good working condition and has at least a half tank of fuel at all times. EDEN recommends that each vehicle be equipped with a winter car kit that includes a shovel, blankets, extra mittens, socks, hats,

booster cables, a flashlight with batteries, a brightly colored cloth to use as a flag, a first aid kit, snacks, and water.

\* Pay attention to weather forecasts. With current technology, it is easy to be aware of the coming weather conditions. A local TV meteorologist uses the slogan, "Know before you go." That's sound advice before leaving home, whether for the day or a more extended adventure.

\* Dress appropriately. Wear layers of loose, lightweight clothing and boots, hats, and mittens. EDEN notes that mittens are preferred since they allow fingers to be together, which keeps hands warmer.

Much of the body's heat escapes through the head, so hats and scarves are important for covering the head and ears. Scarves can also protect the nose and mouth by keeping frigid air from getting into the lungs. Overexertion is common when shoveling heavy snow, so protect your back and heart by taking frequent breaks and drinking water to stay hydrated.

\* Prepare for utility outages. While utility companies strive to keep power up and running, wind, snow, ice, or a combination can wreak havoc on power lines. If you choose to use generators, wood-burning stoves, or other heat sources, be aware that they may produce dangerous levels of carbon monoxide. Be sure to circulate the air with an exhaust fan, or crack a window open. A battery hand-crank weather alert radio is helpful to have on hand.

\* Protect pets and farm animals. Pets are especially susceptible to frostbite on their ears, tails, and paws, and outside pets need extra calories to stay warm. Take measures to ensure their drinking water doesn't freeze. If pets are dry and have enough shelter to fend off wind and snow, they can withstand the cold conditions easier. While livestock tend to be heartier than family pets, they also benefit from a

windbreak such as trees, shrubs, or some type of a cover. They need a place to lie down that is not covered in snow and the ability to reach their food and water.

If you're not fully prepared for our current winter conditions, take steps now. It will leave you feeling less vulnerable and more able to withstand whatever Mother Nature sends our way.

By: Kathleen Riggs, Utah State University Extension professor, [kathleen.riggs@usu.edu](mailto:kathleen.riggs@usu.edu), 435-586-8132