



2026

# WINTER STORM SURVIVAL GUIDE

ESSENTIAL PREPARATION FOR EXTREME COLD,  
ICE, AND EXTENDED POWER OUTAGES

SETH HOLEHOUSE

# 2026 WINTER STORM SURVIVAL GUIDE

## SHARE THIS GUIDE FREELY

This guide may be copied, printed, and distributed without restriction.

Lives depend on widespread access to this information.

## DISCLAIMER

This guide provides general emergency preparedness information. It does not replace professional advice or official emergency guidance. In all emergencies, call 911. The authors assume no liability for actions taken based on this information. Always follow official instructions from local authorities and emergency management.

© 2026 Holehouse Publishing LLC

Free to distribute for non-commercial purposes

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Historic Winter Storm Survival Guide .....	4
What A Storm Like This Can Do.....	4
Time Is Short — Stores Will Empty Fast.....	5
What To Buy That Others Won't Think Of .....	6
Complete Supply Checklist.....	7
What To Do Before The Storm.....	8
What To Do During The Storm .....	9
What To Do After The Storm.....	10
Ways To Keep Warm (And What Is Dangerous).....	11
Dangerous Methods — Do Not Do These.....	12
Dress In Layers.....	13
Pets And Livestock.....	14
Food, Water, And Pipes .....	14
Travel And Cars — If You Get Stuck .....	15
Hypothermia And Frostbite .....	16
Elderly And Vulnerable People .....	18
Band Together .....	19
Texting By Satellite.....	20
Write Down Critical Phone Numbers .....	21
Final Checklist.....	22
Final Thoughts.....	23

## 1. HISTORIC WINTER STORM SURVIVAL GUIDE

Read this now. Share it. Print it.

This storm is not normal. This is not “a cold snap.” This is the kind of storm that breaks regions that are not built for winter.

Many people will lose power. Some will lose heat for days. Some will die from cold, fires, or carbon monoxide.

You still have time. But not much.

## 2. WHAT A STORM LIKE THIS CAN DO

This storm brings heavy snow and ice to areas that cannot handle it.

18+ inches of snow will:

- Shut down roads completely
- Trap people in homes
- Stop emergency response
- Collapse roofs not built for snow load

Ice is worse. Just 1 inch of ice can:

- Snap trees like toothpicks
- Pull down power lines
- Shut off power for days or weeks
- Make every surface deadly

3 inches of ice can cripple an entire region.

Most southern and unprepared areas:

- Do not have enough plows
- Do not have enough salt
- Do not have winter-ready power grids
- Have homes with no fireplaces or backup heat
- Have pipes that aren't insulated for freezing

When the power goes out:

- Furnaces stop working
- Heat pumps fail
- Pipes freeze and burst
- Water systems fail
- Cell towers go down
- You're on your own

People will die from this storm. That's not me trying to scare you. That's reality. People die from hypothermia in their own homes. They die from house fires when they use unsafe heating methods. They die from carbon monoxide poisoning. They die in car accidents. They die because they didn't take it seriously.

Cold kills quietly. So does carbon monoxide. So does fire.

### **3. TIME IS SHORT — STORES WILL EMPTY FAST**

You only have a few days to prepare. That's it.

Big stores will be hit first:

- Walmart, Lowe's, Home Depot, Tractor Supply

Obvious items are already selling out:

- Generators (probably already gone)
- Space heaters
- Propane heaters
- Firewood
- Snow shovels
- Rock salt

Most people are thinking the same way. They're all buying the same stuff. You need to think differently.

Do not panic if those are gone. There are other options most people won't think of.

## 4. WHAT TO BUY THAT OTHERS WON'T THINK OF

While everyone fights over generators, here's what might still be available:

Camping gear (often ignored during storms):

- Canvas or nylon tents (4-8 person size)
- Thick sleeping bags rated for cold weather
- Camping stoves and fuel canisters
- Mylar emergency blankets (the silver ones)
- Hand warmers and foot warmers
- Headlamps (better than flashlights - keeps hands free)

Other overlooked items:

- Candles (many of them, plain unscented)
- Clay plant pots (terra cotta - for the candle heating method)
- Wool blankets from thrift stores
- Styrofoam coolers (for insulation, not just cooling)
- Heavy plastic sheeting and bubble wrap
- Duct tape and heavy-duty trash bags
- Pool noodles (for pipe insulation)
- Reflective car windshield shades (to insulate windows)
- Battery-powered or hand-crank radio
- Power banks and portable phone chargers
- Kitty litter or sand (for traction in car)
- Water jugs and containers
- Cash (ATMs won't work without power)

Camping gear can save your life in this situation.

## 5. COMPLETE SUPPLY CHECKLIST

Get these NOW:

Water (critical):

- One gallon per person per day
- Plan for 7-10 days minimum
- Fill bathtubs and sinks before storm hits
- Fill every container you have
- Freeze some containers (backup if pipes freeze)

Food:

- Non-perishable items that don't need cooking
- Peanut butter, crackers, protein bars, canned goods
- Manual can opener
- High-calorie foods (your body burns more in cold)

Heating supplies:

- Candles, Sterno, camping fuel - whatever you can find
- Matches and lighters (multiple)
- Firewood if you have a fireplace

Light:

- Flashlights and extra batteries (many)
- Headlamps
- Battery-powered lanterns
- Candles

Power:

- Charge all phones, tablets, laptops NOW
- Charge all portable power banks
- Extra batteries for everything
- Car phone chargers

#### Medical:

- First aid kit
- 7+ day supply of all medications
- Thermometer
- Basic pain relievers

#### Sanitation:

- Baby wipes
- Toilet paper (lots)
- Plastic bags and ties
- Bleach and hand sanitizer

#### Other essentials:

- Full tank of gas in your car
- Cash (small bills)
- Important documents in waterproof bag
- Pet food and supplies

## **6. WHAT TO DO BEFORE THE STORM**

Do this now. Don't wait.

#### Prepare your home:

- Fill every bathtub, sink, and container with water
- Drip faucets during the freeze
- Open cabinet doors under sinks (lets warm air reach pipes)
- Insulate exposed pipes with pool noodles, towels, or newspaper
- Know where your main water shutoff valve is
- Seal windows and doors with towels, plastic, or bubble wrap
- Close off unused rooms
- Pick one central room to be your "survival room"
- Clear gutters and bring in outdoor furniture

Power and heat:

- Charge every electronic device you own
- Fill your car with gas
- Set fridge and freezer to coldest settings
- Freeze containers of water (acts as ice blocks if power fails)

People:

- Call elderly family and neighbors NOW
- Strongly invite them to stay with you
- If they refuse, make a plan to check on them daily
- Exchange phone numbers with neighbors
- Tell someone outside the affected area your plan

Prepare your car (even if you don't plan to drive):

- Fill the gas tank completely
- Put emergency supplies in trunk NOW: blankets/sleeping bag, water, snacks, candles, matches, shovel, sand/kitty litter, jumper cables, flashlight, extra clothes, hat and gloves, first aid kit, phone charger

If you're leaving your home to stay elsewhere:

- Turn off main water valve
- Drain all pipes by opening all faucets
- Pour antifreeze in drains and toilets
- Turn off water heater
- Set thermostat to 55°F if power allows
- Unplug all appliances and electronics

## **7. WHAT TO DO DURING THE STORM**

Stay inside. Do not drive unless it's life or death.

Conserve heat:

- Everyone stays in one room together
- Close doors to unused rooms

- Wear layers (see section below)
- Use blankets and sleeping bags
- Share body heat
- Keep curtains/blinds closed at night
- Open them during sunny days for passive heat

Conserve resources:

- Use lights sparingly
- Preserve phone battery
- Only use phone for emergencies
- Eat regularly to maintain body heat
- Drink water even if you're not thirsty
- Do light exercise to generate warmth

Stay informed:

- Listen to battery-powered radio for updates
- Check phone briefly for emergency alerts

Sanitation:

- If toilets don't flush, use plastic bags
- Melt snow for flushing (not drinking)
- Use bottled water for drinking only

## **8. WHAT TO DO AFTER THE STORM**

Don't rush outside. The danger isn't over.

Hazards after the storm:

- Downed power lines (can be buried in snow)
- Falling trees and branches (can fall hours or days later)
- Ice everywhere (on roads, sidewalks, roofs)
- Roof collapses from snow/ice weight
- Flooding from burst pipes

When you do venture out:

- Watch for hanging ice and branches overhead
- Assume ALL downed wires are live and deadly
- Walk carefully - ice is deceptive
- Check on neighbors

Report problems immediately:

- Downed power lines (stay far away, call utility)
- Gas leaks (leave immediately, call from outside)
- People who need help

Recovery:

- Boil water if advised by authorities
- Throw out spoiled food
- Document damage for insurance
- Be patient - repair crews are overwhelmed

## **9. WAYS TO KEEP WARM (AND WHAT IS DANGEROUS)**

The best way to stay warm is to trap your body heat. Think like you're camping in winter.

### SAFE OPTIONS

Create a small, sealed living space:

- Use one small room
- Block air gaps with towels
- Hang blankets over windows and doorways

The tent method (THIS WORKS):

- Set up a camping tent in your living room
- Put thick sleeping bags inside
- Everyone sleeps inside the tent
- Your body heat gets trapped in the small space
- Even a cheap tent makes a huge difference

Candle + clay pot method:

- Place 3-4 tea light candles on a metal tray, with bricks on either side
- Put a terra cotta pot upside down over the candles, resting on the bricks
- The pot absorbs and radiates heat slowly
- This is NOT a room heater - adds warmth nearby only
- Keep away from anything flammable
- NEVER leave unattended
- NEVER sleep with candles burning

Other safe methods:

- Share body heat - huddle together
- Fill water bottles with hot water, put in sleeping bags
- Do light exercise (don't sweat)
- Eat high-calorie foods
- Stay dry - wet clothing will kill you

## **10. DANGEROUS METHODS — DO NOT DO THESE**

NEVER use these indoors:

- Charcoal grills
- Gas grills or propane grills
- Gas generators (even in garage with door open)
- Gas stoves or ovens for heat
- Fire pits
- Running cars in garages

These produce carbon monoxide. You can't see it. You can't smell it. It will kill you in your sleep.

If you must use a generator:

- Keep it OUTSIDE, at least 20 feet from house
- Point exhaust away from all windows and doors
- NEVER in garage, basement, or near windows

## SIGNS OF CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING

If ANYONE feels these symptoms, get outside immediately:

- Headache
- Dizziness
- Nausea
- Confusion
- Drowsiness

Fresh air immediately. Call 911 if symptoms are severe.

## 11. DRESS IN LAYERS

Layers trap heat. This is how you survive.

Three-layer system:

1. Base layer (against skin):

- Thermal underwear, wool or moisture-wicking fabric
- Should be snug but not tight
- AVOID cotton (holds moisture and makes you colder)

2. Insulation layer (middle):

- Fleece or wool sweater
- Traps air and warmth
- Can wear multiple mid-layers if needed

3. Outer layer (shell):

- Windproof/waterproof jacket
- Blocks wind and moisture

Critical areas:

- Head: Wear a hat (you lose most heat through your head)
- Hands: Mittens are warmer than gloves
- Feet: Thick wool socks (2 pairs if boots are big enough)
- Neck: Scarf or neck gaiter

## 12. PETS AND LIVESTOCK

Your animals can die in this cold. Most cannot survive outside.

Pets - Bring them inside NOW:

- Dogs, cats, rabbits, birds - everything comes in
- Create warm space away from drafts
- Keep them off cold floors (blankets, beds, boxes)
- Keep them in your survival room (their body heat helps you too)
- Extra food and water stored
- Watch paws for ice buildup when they do go out

Livestock and Outdoor Animals:

- Move into garages, sheds, barns, or any structure
- If no structure, create windbreaks with tarps or hay bales
- Provide DEEP bedding (straw, hay, wood shavings)
- Block wind completely
- Increase feed significantly (they burn calories to stay warm)
- Check water multiple times per day - break ice frequently
- Group animals together for shared warmth
- Check on them every few hours

This is life or death for your animals. Don't assume they'll be okay.

## 13. FOOD, WATER, AND PIPES

Water Storage:

- Store 1 gallon per person per day
- Fill every container before storm
- Fill bathtubs (for washing, flushing)
- Freeze some containers as backup

Pipes - Before storm:

- Drip faucets (even a trickle prevents freezing)

- Open cabinet doors under sinks to allow warm air in
- Insulate exposed pipes
- Know where your main water shutoff valve is

If pipes freeze:

- Keep faucets slightly open
- Apply gentle heat (hair dryer, warm towels)
- NEVER use open flame or torch
- If pipes burst, shut off main valve immediately

Food - Priority order when power fails:

- Refrigerated food first (first 24-48 hours)
- Freezer food next
- Pantry items last
- Keep fridge and freezer closed as much as possible
- Use a cooler outside if temps stay below 32°F

## **14. TRAVEL AND CARS — IF YOU GET STUCK**

Avoid all travel during the storm. Stay home.

If You Get Stuck in Your Car:

Stay with your car:

- Don't try to walk in a blizzard or whiteout
- Your car is more visible to rescuers than you are

Run engine sparingly:

- Turn on heat for 10 minutes each hour
- Keep exhaust pipe clear of snow (carbon monoxide danger)
- Check exhaust pipe every time before starting engine
- Crack a window slightly for ventilation

Stay visible:

- Tie bright cloth to antenna or door handle

- Use hazard lights sparingly (preserve battery)
- Once per hour, clear snow from windows and exhaust pipe

Stay warm:

- Use blankets and sleeping bag from emergency kit
- Do light exercises to maintain circulation
- Keep moving fingers and toes

Emergency Supplies for Your Car (Put These In NOW):

- Thick blankets or sleeping bag
- Extra winter clothes
- Hat, gloves, thick socks
- Water bottles
- High-calorie snacks
- Flashlight and batteries
- Phone charger (car adapter)
- Small shovel
- Kitty litter or sand (for traction)
- Jumper cables
- Ice scraper
- First aid kit
- Candles and matches

## **15. HYPOTHERMIA AND FROSTBITE**

Hypothermia - when your body loses heat faster than it can produce it:

Early signs:

- Shivering (this is your body's alarm system)
- Confusion or slurred speech
- Drowsiness or fatigue
- Fumbling hands, stumbling

Severe signs:

- Shivering stops (very bad sign)
- Weak pulse, shallow breathing
- Unconsciousness

What to do:

- Get person to warm place immediately
- Remove any wet clothing
- Warm center of body first (chest, neck, head, groin)
- Use blankets, dry clothing, body heat
- Give warm (NOT hot) beverages if conscious
- DO NOT use direct heat (heating pad, fire)
- Call 911 for severe cases

Frostbite - when skin and tissue freeze:

Most common on: Fingers, toes, nose, ears, cheeks, chin

Signs:

- Numbness (often first sign)
- White, grayish, or yellowish skin
- Skin feels hard or waxy
- Clumsiness (affected area feels like a block)

What to do:

- Get to warm place
- Immerse affected area in warm (NOT hot) water (98-105°F)
- Or use body heat (armpit, belly)
- Don't rub the area - causes damage
- Don't use direct heat
- Seek medical attention

Prevention:

- Dress in layers
- Stay dry

- Eat regularly
- Cover all exposed skin
- Come inside regularly to warm up
- Check yourself and others every 30 minutes when outside

## 16. ELDERLY AND VULNERABLE PEOPLE

Cold kills seniors first. Also at high risk: infants, people with medical conditions, those living alone.

If You Have Elderly Family or Neighbors:

Call them TODAY. Not tomorrow. TODAY.

- Strongly urge them to stay with you during the storm
- Don't take "I'll be fine" as an answer
- If they refuse, visit them before storm with supplies
- Make a schedule to check on them every 4-6 hours
- Make sure they have 7+ days of medication
- Check that they have food and water
- Make sure they know how to stay warm

Red flags that require immediate action:

- They live alone
- They have no backup heat source
- They're on medications that affect circulation
- They have mobility issues

If You Are Elderly or Vulnerable:

This is not the time for pride or independence.

- Accept help when offered
- Stay with family if at all possible
- Keep phone charged and nearby at all times
- Tell multiple people your plan
- Don't try to "tough it out"

Make it your responsibility to check on vulnerable people. They may not ask for help even when they need it.

## 17. BAND TOGETHER

This is survival. Survival is not a solo sport.

Why Banding Together Matters:

- Shared body heat in one space
- Shared resources (food, water, heat, light)
- Someone to help if emergency happens
- Prevents isolation, panic, and poor decisions
- Emotional support

Family and Friends Nearby:

- Call them now and make a plan
- Decide which house to shelter in together
- Pick house with best heating (fireplace, wood stove)
- Pool your resources

Neighbors:

- Knock on doors today
- Exchange phone numbers
- Share your plan
- Agree to check on each other daily

Don't Be Shy. Don't Be Proud.

Examples:

- You don't have heat but your neighbor has a fireplace? Ask to share their space.
- You have extra food but no water? Trade with someone.
- Someone elderly lives near you? Bring them to your house.

One warm house is better than five cold ones. This is how communities survive disasters.

## 18. TEXTING BY SATELLITE

Cell towers may go down. You might not be able to call. But you might still be able to send emergency texts via satellite.

iPhone (iPhone 14 or Newer with iOS 18 or Later):

- Make sure phone is updated to iOS 18 or later
- Go outside with clear view of sky
- Open Messages app
- Try to send a text normally
- If no service, you'll see "Use Satellite" option
- Tap "Use Satellite"
- Follow on-screen instructions to point phone at sky
- Hold still while sending

Android:

Google is rolling out satellite texting on newer phones (Pixel 9, some Samsung Galaxy S24+). Check your phone's Settings > Safety & Emergency > look for "Satellite" options.

General Satellite Tips:

- This only works for emergencies
- Keep messages SHORT (under 160 characters)
- Include location in message
- Be specific: "No heat, elderly person, need rescue at [address]"
- May take several minutes per message

Test this feature NOW so you know how to use it when you need it.

## 19. WRITE DOWN CRITICAL PHONE NUMBERS

Phones die. Internet goes down. You need these written on paper.

WHO	NUMBER
Emergency Services	911
Local Police (non-emergency)	
Fire Department (non-emergency)	
Local Hospital	
Poison Control	1-800-222-1222
UTILITIES	
Electric Company	
Gas Company	
Water Company	
FAMILY	
Family Member 1:	
Family Member 2:	
Family Member 3:	
NEIGHBORS	
Neighbor 1:	
Neighbor 2:	
Neighbor 3:	
MEDICAL	
Doctor:	
Pharmacy:	
Veterinarian:	
OTHER	
Insurance Agent:	
Local Emergency Shelter:	
Out-of-area contact:	

Keep this list by your phone, in your survival room, in your car, and in your wallet.

## 20.FINAL CHECKLIST

Before the storm hits, verify you have done ALL of these:

- 1 gallon water per person per day (7-10 days)
- Bathtubs and containers filled
- Non-perishable food (7-10 days)
- Manual can opener
- Pet food (7-10 days)
- Identified survival room
- Sealed windows and doors
- Blankets and sleeping bags gathered
- Tent set up (if using tent method)
- Candles and matches
- Firewood (if applicable)
- All devices charged
- Power banks charged
- Extra batteries
- Flashlights and headlamps
- Battery radio
- First aid kit
- 7+ day medication supply
- Know signs of hypothermia/frostbite

- Know carbon monoxide dangers
- Pipes protected (dripping, insulated)
- Know location of water shutoff
- Elderly checked on and plan made
- Neighbors contacted
- Phone numbers written down
- Family knows the plan
- Pets brought inside
- Livestock shelter prepared
- Gas tank full
- Emergency kit in car
- Cash on hand (small bills)
- Decision made: stay home or leave

## **21. FINAL THOUGHTS**

This guide isn't meant to scare you. It's meant to prepare you.

Most people who die in winter storms die because they didn't prepare or didn't take it seriously. Don't be one of them.

You have a small window of time. Use it.

- Buy what you can
- Prepare what you can
- Talk to your people
- Make a plan
- Execute that plan

When it gets bad, remember:

- You're not alone
- Your neighbors are going through it too
- Help each other
- Check on each other
- Share what you have

This storm will test people. But preparation saves lives.

Print this guide. Share it with everyone you know. Act now, not later.

We'll get through this.

Stay safe.

*Seth Holehouse*