

# Routt County Office of Emergency Management



## Emergency Preparedness & Response News

### Winter Weather Is In the Forecast

Cooler weather has arrived and the first “official” day of winter – December 21 – will be here before you realize. Whether you enjoy the snow – and wintry weather – or not, we know that snow can occur before the “official” start of winter.

Whenever winter weather arrives, remember this simple message:

#### Get Where You Need to Be Before the Weather Gets Bad

In other words, stay off the roads when it snows!

Overall, most winter storm deaths result from vehicle or other transportation accidents caused by ice and snow. Residents should **avoid driving when conditions include sleet, freezing rain or drizzle, snow or dense fog**. These are serious conditions that are often underestimated, and they make driving – and even walking outside – very hazardous.



With winter on the horizon, we encourage you to begin thinking about your commute. Do you have alternate routes home in case there’s a need to modify your path? Think about, explore, and plan for alternate routes now as we enjoy mild fall weather.

### 6 Things You Can Do to Get Ready for Winter Weather

Here are six important tips for protecting yourself and your home this winter:

1. **Get where you need to be before the weather gets bad.** It’s always best to stay off roads during winter storms. Most traffic crashes happen within the first two hours after a storm starts. Get road conditions by calling 511.
2. **If you heat with a fireplace or wood stove,** have a professional check it, especially if it has been a long time since the last cleaning. Residue can build up and cause fires.

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3. **Use space heaters safely.** Never plug them into extension cords; plug into wall outlets. Keep space heaters at least three feet from other objects, and turn off before going to bed.
4. **Stay informed during power outages.** Be sure you have a battery-powered and/or hand-crank radio (and extra batteries). Get one with the NOAA Weather Radio band so you can hear winter weather reports directly from the National Weather Service as well as local radio stations. These are available at electronics, discount and sporting goods stores, and online from many retail outlets. Models are available for those with special needs. And remember your cell phone — make sure you keep it charged and have power cords in your vehicle for charging your phone in case you lose power in your home.
5. **Don't use candles during power outages.** Many home fires in winter are caused by candles. Flashlights are much safer. Be sure to have plenty of extra batteries.
6. Most importantly, **you need a family emergency plan.** If your family cannot return home because of severe weather or closed roads, you need to decide now on where you will meet to reunite. You also need an out-of-town relative or friend to be your family emergency contact.



**Information Source:** [www.nws.noaa.gov/om/winter/](http://www.nws.noaa.gov/om/winter/)

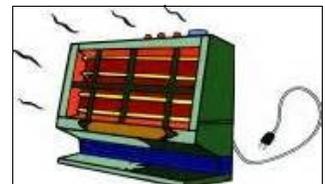
## Portable Space Heater Safety Tips



Portable electric heaters are high-wattage appliances that have the potential to ignite nearby combustible materials like curtains, beds, sofas, paper, clothing, and flammable liquids. If ignition results from a heater left on and unattended, a major fire could result.

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) recommends the following for the safe use of electric heaters:

- Never operate a heater you suspect is damaged. Before use, inspect the heater, cord, and plug for damage. Follow all operation and maintenance instructions. Visit [www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov) or [www.SaferProducts.gov](http://www.SaferProducts.gov) to see if your electric heater has been recalled.
- Never leave the heater operating while unattended, or while you are sleeping.
- Keep combustible material such as beds, sofas, curtains, papers, and clothes at least three (3) feet (0.9 m) from the front, sides, and rear of the heater.



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- Be sure the heater plug fits tightly into the wall outlet. If not, do not use the outlet to power the heater.
  - During use, check frequently to determine if the heater plug or cord, wall outlet, or faceplate is HOT! If the plug, outlet, or faceplate is hot, discontinue use of the heater, and have a qualified electrician check and/or replace the plug or faulty wall outlet(s). If the cord is hot, disconnect the heater, and have it inspected/repaired by an authorized repair person.
  - Never power the heater with an extension cord or power strip.
  - Insure that the heater is placed on a stable, level surface, and located where it will not be knocked over.
- When purchasing a heater, ask the salesperson whether the heater has been safety-certified. A certified heater will have a safety certification mark.
  - Never run the heater's cord under rugs or carpeting. This can damage the cord, causing it and nearby objects to burn.
  - To prevent electrical shocks and electrocutions, always keep electric heaters away from water, and NEVER touch an electric heater if you are wet.

## Winter Storms & Extreme Cold

While the danger from winter weather varies across the country, nearly all Americans, regardless of where they live, are likely to face some type of severe winter weather at some point in their lives. Winter storms can range from a moderate snow over a few hours to a blizzard with blinding, wind-driven snow that lasts for several days. Many winter storms are accompanied by dangerously low temperatures and sometimes by strong winds, icing, sleet and freezing rain.

One of the primary concerns is the winter weather's ability to knock out heat, power and communications services to your home or office, sometimes for days at a time. Heavy snowfall and extreme cold can immobilize an entire region.

The National Weather Service refers to winter storms as the "Deceptive Killers" because most deaths are indirectly related to the storm. Instead, people die in traffic accidents on icy roads and of hypothermia from prolonged exposure to cold. It is important to be prepared for winter weather before it strikes.

### [Extreme Cold: A Prevention Guide to Promote Your Personal Health and Safety](#)

The Extreme Cold Prevention Guide combines all of the key content of the CDC Winter Weather website into one downloadable, printable file. Printing this PDF file ensures that you will have important winter weather health and safety information available even when you're without power or Internet service.

