

Severe Winter Storm Preparedness Tips for Child Care Providers

The dangers of winter storms include the intense cold, snow, ice, breakdown of transportation due to road conditions, and disruption of electrical power. These conditions may incapacitate an area, making transportation difficult and disrupting utility services. Taking preventative action is your best defense against extreme cold-weather conditions.

Warning

- ❖ Snow and ice storm watches and warnings are issued by the National Weather Service (NWS). When such weather threatens, **listen to and monitor** a local radio/TV station or NOAA radio for bulletins.

Preparation

- ❖ Ensure the facility disaster and emergency plan is current and placed in every room used by children. Be sure to have a plan to:
 - Determine procedures for delayed openings, closings, and early releases.
 - Define indoor play facilities for gross motor development or outdoor play times.
 - Communicate proper clothing expectations program-wide and maintain supplies to accommodate children who come to the program with insufficiently warm clothing.
 - Prepare shelter-in-place procedures and materials in case children and staff must stay at the program for extended periods of time.
- ❖ Establish procedures for securing the facility against damage to utilities (frozen water pipes, etc.).
- ❖ If your program has transportation services, ensure facility vehicles have a winter car kit. Store shovels, ice, and other emergency supplies in case your vehicles are stuck in a winter storm.
- ❖ Prepare the facility's vehicles for emergency travel on ice and snow (tire chains, etc.).
- ❖ Check emergency and alternate utility sources. Possibly the greatest hazard in severe weather is the loss of electrical power and thus heat and light.
- ❖ Prepare to extend operations in case parents cannot travel to pick up their children.
- ❖ Make sure there is an emergency/disaster kit that contains bottled water and canned dried food that can be prepared without cooking in case of a power outage.
- ❖ Add the following supplies to your emergency/disaster supply kit: rock salt to melt ice on walkways; sand to improve traction; snow shovels, and other snow removal equipment.
- ❖ Learn how to shut off water valves in case a pipe bursts.



Response

- ❖ Ensure that children are wearing winter clothing to protect them from frostbite and hypothermia.
- ❖ Watch for signs of frostbite, which include loss of feeling and white or pale appearance in extremities such as fingers, toes, ear lobes, and the tip of the nose. If symptoms are detected, get medical help immediately.
- ❖ Keep dry. Change wet clothing frequently to prevent a loss of body heat. Watch for signs of hypothermia. These include uncontrollable shivering, memory loss, disorientation, incoherence, slurred speech, drowsiness, and apparent exhaustion.
- ❖ Wear several layers of loose fitting, lightweight warm clothing rather than one layer of heavy clothing. The outer garments should be tightly woven and water repellent.
 - Wear mittens, which are warmer than gloves
 - Wear a hat.
 - Cover your mouth with a scarf to protect your lungs.

When planning for winter storms and extreme cold, you should consider the following to prevent weather-related illnesses. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) suggests that programs plan for:

- ❖ Warm spaces such as indoor play in heated facilities;
- ❖ Sufficient warm fluids and well-balanced meals to maintain body temperature and help stay warm;
- ❖ Notification for families about appropriate clothing for cold days;
- ❖ Systems for deciding on closures, late openings, and early delays; and
- ❖ Relationships with local transportation to ensure the safe transportation of children and staff to their homes.

Sources:

Adapted from CDC, *Emergency Preparedness and Response: Winter Weather* and SEMA, *Severe Winter Weather*, <http://www.sema.dps.mo.gov/>

Resources:

Child Care Emergency Preparedness -

<http://health.mo.gov/safety/childcare/emergency.php>

CDC Winter, Weather - <https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/winter/index.html>

NOAA Radio - <http://www.nws.noaa.gov/nwr/index.php>

NWS - <http://www.weather.gov/>

Ready.Gov, Snow Storm and Extreme Weather -

<https://www.ready.gov/winter-weather>

Red Cross, Winter Storm Preparedness - <http://www.redcross.org/get-help/prepare-for-emergencies/types-of-emergencies/winter-storm#About>