



## ***It's Winter – Are You Ready?***

So far, predictions of a colder than normal winter for Virginia are right on target. Winter is blasting Virginia; do you know what to do?

- **If the power goes out and you have no heat:** Depending on how well your home is insulated, and how cold it is outside, it could take as few as 4-6 hours before you would be uncomfortably cold and need blankets or sleeping bags for warmth.
- **If you decide to stay in your home during an extended power outage:** You need a minimum of three days of food that doesn't need electricity. If you depend on well water, the electric pump will not work. Pipes could freeze. You need water – three gallons per person will last three days. Choose a room that will be the easiest to heat, and close it off. This should be the room with a fireplace or some other heating unit. Dress in several layers of loose-fitting, lightweight clothing, and wear a hat and mittens.
- **If you use kerosene or propane heaters:** These are a fire hazard and should be used with much caution. The room must be ventilated by opening a window. A ceiling fan is not enough ventilation. Keep heaters at least three feet away from flammable objects such as curtains, blankets and furniture. Place heaters on a hard surface, not on carpet. Refuel them outdoors **after** they have cooled.
- **If you have pets:** Bring them inside. If they must stay outside, be sure they have shelter and insulation from the cold. Don't use electric heating pads, kerosene heaters or any other heating appliance because they can burn your pet. Make sure your pet has enough food and unfrozen water; they may need more during cold temperatures.
- **If you must drive during a winter storm:** Most traffic crashes happen within the first two hours after a storm begins. Snow plows start on roads that carry the most traffic and then move to smaller roads. Try to stay off the road to give plows time and space to work. Wait until daylight to drive so that sunlight can warm the roads. Call 511 for road conditions or visit [www.511Virginia.org](http://www.511Virginia.org). Buckle up every time you drive.
- **If the power is out and roads are blocked:** You will need information. Get a battery and/or crank operated radio with Weather Band so you can hear local stations and reports from the National Weather Service. You can buy these radios at electronics and sporting goods stores, department stores, boat and marine accessory stores, through catalogues and on-line. Prices range from \$25-100.

Go to [www.ReadyVirginia.gov](http://www.ReadyVirginia.gov) for more about preparing for winter weather emergencies.