

# PREPARING FOR WINTER WEATHER IN MAINE



Brought to you by *The Healthcare Coalition of Maine*

Maine weather can be completely unpredictable. It is important to know about the winter weather resources available to you and how best to prepare. In this document, you will find links to information to help you stay safe and informed.

## How Your Organization Can Prepare for Winter

- Make sure driveways, parking lots and sidewalks are clear from snow and ice so staff and patients can safely access your facility. Create a contingency plan for plowing your facility and surrounding roads. Seek out private contractors who will plow your walkways, parking lots and access roads.
- Remind staff and patients to have emergency and back-up medical supplies and medications. If your patients anticipate needing more supplies (e.g. oxygen, etc.), encourage them to contact the company in advance and explain that they are concerned about this season's severe weather and that their supply may not last or expire.
- Encourage staff and patients to pick up public transit schedules with snow route information and to schedule extra time to get to appointments or work. Please check with your local municipality for snow plow routes.
- Update your communications plan with multiple ways to contact patients and staff. Also, remind staff and patients of the emergency/severe weather plan for your facility — this is especially important for dialysis or chemotherapy patients.

<https://nwhrn.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Winter-Weather-Bulletin-2017-18-1.pdf>

## About The Healthcare Coalition of Maine



The Healthcare Coalition of Maine (HCCME) is a collaboration of health and medical partners working together to mitigate against, prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergencies through planning, training, exercising, communicating, and relationship building.

The HCCME brings together diverse healthcare organizations in the state to foster communication and coordination. This collaborative approach facilitates a more effective and efficient response within the healthcare system.

For more information about the Healthcare Coalition of Maine, please visit our website at [mainehccs.com](http://mainehccs.com).

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## Vehicle Preparedness

Winterize your car, including a check of your battery, antifreeze, oil level and tires. Check the thermostat, ignition system, lights, hazard lights, exhaust system, heater, defroster and brakes. Always keep your gas tank at least half full.

Snowy or icy roads cause hazardous driving conditions. Before the first big storm, check your tires for tread and change your tires to snow tires on your vehicle if needed.

If you are stuck in your car, run the motor for 10 minutes each hour for heat. Make sure that your tailpipe is clear of snow. Make yourself visible to rescuers by turning on the dome light at night when running the engine, or by tying a brightly colored cloth to your antenna.

Remember, 4-wheel drive does not mean your vehicle will not slide. Use caution and drive at slower speeds when roads are snow-packed and/or icy.

If you do get stranded, do not leave your vehicle. Call 911 for assistance. Having some sand or cat litter to put at the base of your tires may help you regain traction to get back on the road.

### For Current Road Conditions

visit [New England 511](#)

## Maine Alert Systems

Before bad weather hits or an emergency strikes, register to receive alerts from the following systems:

- \* [Maine DOT](#)
- \* [Maine Citizen Alert System](#)
- \* [Maine Health Alert System](#)

## Emergency Management By County

[Androscoggin County Emergency Management Agency](#)  
[Arroostook County Emergency Management Agency](#)  
[Cumberland County Emergency Management Agency](#)  
[Franklin County Emergency Management Agency](#)  
[Hancock County Emergency Management Agency](#)  
[Kennebec County Emergency Management Agency](#)  
[Knox County Emergency Management Agency](#)  
[Lincoln County Emergency Management Agency](#)  
[Oxford County Emergency Management Agency](#)  
[Penobscot County Emergency Management Agency](#)  
[Piscataquis County Emergency Management Agency](#)  
[Sagadahoc County Emergency Management Agency](#)  
[Somerset County Emergency Management Agency](#)  
[Waldo County Emergency Management Agency](#)  
[Washington County Emergency Management Agency](#)  
[York County Emergency Management Agency](#)

## Winter Survival Kit for Your Vehicle

Consider carrying a [Winter Safety and Survival Kit](#) in your car. In an emergency, it could save your life and the lives of your passengers. Here is what you may need:

- a shovel
- windshield scraper and small broom
- flashlight with extra batteries
- battery powered radio
- water, snacks and energy bars
- maps and compass
- matches and small candles
- extra hats, socks and mittens
- first aid kit with pocket knife
- necessary medications
- blankets or sleeping bag
- rope or tow chain
- road salt, sand or cat litter for traction
- booster cables
- emergency flares and reflectors
- fluorescent distress flag and whistle to attract attention
- cell phone adapter to plug into lighter
- large, empty can with cover and toilet paper (sanitary purposes)
- hand sanitizer/wet wipes





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## Utility Links

How to prepare for a utility outage: includes links to outage preparedness, gas safety, computer and internet protection, generator information and checklists.

### Electricity

- ◇ [Central Maine Power Outage Center](#)
- ◇ [Emera Maine Outage Center](#)

### Natural Gas Safety

- ◇ [Maine Natural Gas- Gas Leaks and Emergency Page](#)
- ◇ [Summit Natural Gas of Maine Safety Page](#)
- ◇ [Bangor Natural Gas Safety Information](#)
- ◇ [Natural Gas Emergency Procedures and Accident Prevention](#)

### Phone

- ◇ [Verizon Outages Page](#)
- ◇ [AT&T Outage Detector](#)

### Computer and Internet

- ◇ [Century Link Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery Planning](#)

### Generator

- ◇ Check the generator's fuel type and write it down by the generator.
- ◇ Run monthly maintenance tests.
- ◇ Have a back up plan if the generator fails.

### Snow Shoveling

- ◇ [Why Do People Die Shoveling Snow?](#)

## How to Prolong Your Phone's Life In a Power Outage

The first thing to do is to recharge anything that can itself recharge your phone. If you have an external battery pack for your phone, top that off. If you have a laptop, do that next. Some Windows laptops can charge phones over their USB ports even when they're asleep or shut off.

Next try reducing your phone's battery drain as much as possible. Apple and Google both have good general power-management advice. A key part in both is to check how much each app contributes to draining your phone's battery, in which case you should force the app to stop or even uninstall it.

Turning off cellular data and then turning it on once an hour or two can further extend the phone's runtime by ensuring that no apps can accelerate data usage while still letting you make phone calls and send and receive text messages. In Android, open Settings and tap Data usage; in IOS, open Settings and tap Cellular.

Finally, both iOS and Android have low-power modes that will throttle back most of the phone. You can verify that each is enabled on either an iPhone or an Android device by opening Settings and tapping Battery.

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## Weather Links

- \* [Winter Storm Safety Checklist](#) (Describes the difference between a winter storm/watch/advisory/outlook)
- \* [NOAA Weather Safety](#)
- \* [NOAA Storm Prediction Center](#)
- \* [Red Cross Guidance](#)
- \* [Sustainable and Climate Resilient Health Care Facilities Toolkit](#)
- \* [CMS Templates and Checklists](#)



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## Facility Safety

**Make a facility response plan that includes all staff areas.**

- ◇ [CMS LTCF Checklist for Emergency Planning](#)
- ◇ [Winter Facility Preparation Checklist](#)

**If you have to shelter in place, things to consider for your facility:**

- \* Do you have a generator? Will snow affect your generator?
- \* If staff can't come in, how will you sustain operations?
  - \* Rotating shifts, housekeeping, food service, etc.
  - \* Who are essential staff?
    - \* Where can stranded staff and visitors sleep?
    - \* How will you feed them?
- \* Do you have enough extra food, sheets, blankets, medical supplies and water if a shipment cannot be made?
- \* How will you clear the parking lot and sidewalks from snow? Who will help staff get out of the parking lot if their cars are snowed in? Does your staff have the proper equipment and clothing to work outside if needed?
- \* What if the roof leaks?
- \* How will this be budgeted/compensated? Will staff be given extra pay? Will their meals be compensated? Will stranded visitors have to pay for meals? Talk to your finance team and get it planned in advance.

### REMEMBER:

- \* [CMS Fire Safety Requirements for Certain Healthcare Facilities](#)
- \* Floor heaters are NOT allowed in patient care areas.
- \* Egress still needs to be considered during storms.
- \* Icicles on buildings are dangerous, so remove if possible.



## Tips from EMS

- ◇ Be on alert for confused and/or dementia patients who may wander away from health and residential facilities during the winter months.
  - \* [Winter Safety Measures for Health Care Providers](#)
- ◇ Weather-related emergencies pose a significant risk for dialysis patients, who rely on regular treatments to keep them alive.
  - \* [CMS Emergency Preparedness Rule](#)
  - \* [ESRD Network Emergency Preparedness Guide for Chronic Dialysis Facilities](#)
  - \* [Kidney Fund Winter Weather Preparedness](#)
- ◇ When winter snowflakes fall, so do people.
  - \* [Winter Fall Prevention & Safety Tips](#)
- ◇ Driving in the snow can be stressful, be prepared to drive in winter conditions.
  - \* [Winter Driving Tips](#)
- ◇ Prepare Home Health patients for sheltering in place. Teach them about their medications and any other home health items they may need if your staff cannot get to them during a winter storm.

## Other Resources

- \* FEMA Preparedness Information: [Winter Awareness Tips](#)
- \* Red Cross Preparedness Information: [Winter Storm Safety](#)