

# Winter Preparedness in the Retreat

December 2006

*Put this plan on a bulletin board or refrigerator for reference during an emergency*

## **In any emergency, call 911**

Winter storms can create serious safety concerns. Severe weather has the potential to disrupt power to your home and to the entire Retreat and Glen Haven community. Severe weather may also limit your ability to get to Estes Park to buy groceries, prescriptions and other necessities. Knowledge of forecasted weather conditions and attention to personal preparedness will reduce the impact to your family and your property. Make it a habit to listen to the local radio or television stations for weather watches and warnings and advice.

Whether due to an extreme snowfall, an ice storm or a prolonged power outage, residents should be prepared to provide for their own needs for at least 72 hours.

### **Consider having these items available in your home:**

- A supply (three-day minimum) of prescription medications. These may need to be purchased at your own expense since some insurance policies will not pay for these, or may require a form to be filled out to get reimbursed for them.
- A three-day supply of water (include water for pets). You need one gallon of water per person per day – 1/2 for drinking and 1/2 for food preparation and hygiene.
- Several varieties of canned foods, meat and dried fruit. Include a manual can opener. Dried soups, peanut butter, nuts, granola bars, evaporated canned or powdered milk and cereal are also good choices.
- Juice or juice crystals.
- If needed, sufficient infant supplies including disposable diapers, disposable bottles, formula, etc.
- A three-day supply of pet food, if required
- Large and medium-sized plastic garbage bags (orange or yellow make good visible signals). Large bags can also be used as ponchos, ground covers or blankets.
- Plastic or paper dishes.
- Ice melt such as a calcium chloride mix. Rock salt can disintegrate concrete and harms the environment.
- Sand to improve traction
- Snow shovels and other snow removal equipment.
- A portable radio and extra batteries.
- A first-aid kit that includes extra prescription medication, extra eyeglasses, bandages, sterile gauze pads, tape, scissors, tweezers, antibiotic ointment, hydrogen peroxide and over-the-counter pain pills.
- A pocket knife (Swiss army style), a whistle and a spare set of house and car keys.
- Sleeping bags and extra blankets.
- Water purification tablets.
- A flashlight and extra batteries, candles and waterproof matches.
- Jumper cables.

You may also wish to have a large bucket with a tight-fitting lid on hand to use as a toilet. Use the bucket to store other emergency tools like an axe, a folding shovel and rope.

### **Hazards associated with winter storms include:**

- Car accidents due to slippery roadways
- Slips and falls due to slippery walkways
- Hypothermia and frostbite due to the cold weather exposure
- Being struck by falling objects such as tree limbs, wires or utility poles
- Electrocutation due to downed power lines or downed objects in contact with power lines
- Falls from heights (e.g. falls from ladders, roofs or skylights while removing snow)
- Roof collapse or property damage under weight of snow or falling trees
- Exhaustion, exposure or dehydration
- Isolation and lack of basic supplies
- Stranded motorists
- Carbon monoxide poisoning
- Back injuries or heart attack while shoveling snow
- Melting snow causing flooding
- Blocked furnace vents on roof from snow. Know where that vent is, and check it visually, particularly during windy conditions that cause drifting. Don't try to climb on the roof to clear it. You may be able to get access to it from the attic and clear it by pushing a heavy wire (such as from a coat hanger) through it.

### **Power Outages**

- Most power outages last for just a few moments. In extreme cases, such as during severe weather events, outages can last for more than a day.
- Think ahead and have a flashlight, electric lantern, extra batteries and candles handy. Remember to use candles with caution and use proper candle holders. Never leave burning candles unattended, as they are a potential fire hazard.
- Prepare for possible isolation in your home by having an alternate heating system or sufficient heating fuel for fire places or wood burning stoves.
- Stay away from fallen power lines. A hanging power line could be charged (live) and you run the risk of electrocution. Remember also that ice, branches or power lines can continue to break and fall for several hours after the end of the storm.
- Customers in areas impacted by power outages may be asked to unplug or turn off all non-essential appliances, lights and equipment. This allows the system to stabilize when it is restored in cold weather.
- It's a good idea to get in the habit of trimming dead branches and assessing the trees on your property to reduce the danger of these falling onto power lines or your house during a storm.

### **Heat Failure**

If your home heating system fails, take these precautions:

- Remain calm - your house will remain warm for several hours.
- Avoid opening doors unnecessarily.
- During a power failure, turn off all electrical appliances.
- If you have an alternate heat source, begin using it before the house cools down. Ensure that you maintain adequate ventilation.
- Stay warm by dressing in layers and bringing out extra blankets.
- Consider closing off one room for primary heating and use.
- If you are concerned about pipes freezing--leave a tap running slightly. Opening one tap even a small amount will keep water moving through the system and will be enough to keep the water from freezing in all but extremely cold temperatures.

If your home is heated electrically you may wish to prepare for a power failure. If you consider installing a non-electric standby stove or heater, choose heating units that do not depend on an electric motor, electric fan or other electrical device to function. If the standby heating unit will use the normal house oil or gas supply, make sure to have it connected and vented properly by a competent technician.

**Never use a camp stove, barbecue, or propane or kerosene heater indoors.  
A build-up of carbon monoxide gas in unventilated areas can be deadly.**

Before considering the use of an emergency home generator during a power failure, check with furnace, appliance and lighting fixture dealers or manufacturers regarding power requirements and proper operating procedures. Use caution when operating generators, assuring they are in a well-ventilated area. Do not connect your home portable generator directly to a house wiring system without the proper installation of an approved transfer switch and an inspection and approval by an electrical inspector.

### **Icy conditions**

Remember, stairways and sidewalks may be icy and increase the risk of falls. Keep these areas clear and snow-free. Consider using ice-melt, sand or kitty litter to provide traction in these areas.

### **Evacuations**

During extreme conditions, some people may want to make alternate arrangements for overnight stays with relatives, friends or neighbors. Listen to the radio for emergency instructions from local officials.

If you must leave your home, remember to take your emergency “grab and go” kit. This should include:

- Flashlight and battery powered radio
- Extra clothing
- Essential medicines and toiletries
- Essential emergency supplies
- First aid kit
- Important documents, cash and family identification

### **Treating Hypothermia**

Wind-chill is a combination of cold temperatures and wind conditions which may cause rapid loss of body temperature. Excess wind-chill may require special precautions for outdoor activities. If frostbite or hypothermia is suspected, begin warming the person slowly and seek immediate medical assistance.

### **Prepare your home and structures**

- Prepare for possible isolation in your home by having sufficient heating fuel; regular fuel sources may be cut off. For example, store a good supply of dry, seasoned wood for your fireplace or wood-burning stove.
- House fires pose an additional risk. The fire truck may not be able to make it to your house due to roads being closed from the snowfall. To give yourself some fire protection, have multiple fire extinguishers on hand and make sure everyone in your house knows how to use them.

- Winterize your home to extend the life of your fuel supply by insulating walls and attics, caulking and weather-stripping doors and windows, and installing storm windows or covering windows with plastic.
- Winterize your house, barn, shed or any other structure that may provide shelter for your family, neighbors, pets, or equipment. Clear rain gutters; repair roof leaks and cut away tree branches that could fall on a house or other structure during a storm.
- Insulate pipes with insulation or newspapers and plastic and allow faucets to drip a little during cold weather to avoid freezing.
- Learn how to shut off water valves (in case a pipe bursts).
- Know ahead of time what you should do to help elderly or disabled friends, neighbors or employees.
- Hire a contractor to check the structural ability of the roof to sustain unusually heavy weight from the accumulation of snow.

### **Prepare your car**

Check or have a mechanic check the following items on your car:

- Antifreeze levels - ensure they are sufficient to avoid freezing.
- Battery and ignition system - should be in top condition and battery terminals should be clean.
- Brakes - check for wear and fluid levels.
- Exhaust system - check for leaks and crimped pipes and repair or replace as necessary. Carbon monoxide is deadly and usually gives no warning.
- Fuel and air filters - replace and keep water out of the system by using additives and maintaining a full tank of gas.
- Heater and defroster - ensure they work properly.
- Lights and flashing hazard lights - check for serviceability.
- Oil - check for level and weight. Heavier oils congeal more at low temperatures and do not lubricate as well.
- Thermostat - ensure it works properly.
- Windshield wiper equipment - repair any problems and maintain proper washer fluid level.
- Install good winter tires. Make sure the tires have adequate tread. All-weather radials are usually adequate for most winter conditions. However, chains or snow tires with studs are very helpful.
- Maintain at least a half tank of gas during the winter season.
- Place a winter emergency kit in each car that includes:
  - a shovel
  - windshield scraper and small broom
  - flashlight
  - battery powered radio with extra batteries
  - water
  - snack food
  - matches
  - extra hats, socks and mittens
  - First aid kit with pocket knife
  - necessary medications
  - blanket(s)
  - tow chain or rope
  - road salt and sand

- booster cables
- emergency flares
- fluorescent distress flag

**Dress for the Weather**

- 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.

**Snow removal**

- The Retreat roads crew will clear the primary roads except Dunraven Glade which Larimer County will do. Driveways will not be plowed.
- Consider purchasing a snow blower, or get together with your neighbors to buy one to share.
- Several Retreat residents have snowplows on their vehicles. Contact them in the fall to make arrangements.

**Keeping in contact**

- Provide your email address to the Webmaster so that you can receive updates during the storm
- Know your neighbor’s phone numbers
- Keep one phone that is hardwired to the phone jack (not portable) so that you have phone connection in the event of power outage
- Check the website [www.rla-gh.com](http://www.rla-gh.com) for updates and contact names and phone numbers
- Know the phone number of the Retreat contact person in your road segment

**Contact numbers**

Write down the following phone numbers. Leave on refrigerator for both yourself and others to use for a quick reference.

Relative	_____	_____
Neighbor	_____	_____
Doctor	_____	_____
Other medical	_____	_____
Others	_____	_____
	_____	_____
	_____	_____

**In case of emergency, call 911**