



***For Immediate Release***

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**November 14-18 is Winter Weather Awareness Week in Wisconsin**

MADISON, Wis. – Another Wisconsin winter is just around the corner and now is a great time to plan for what you will do when temperatures drop and the snow starts falling. To help encourage everyone to prepare, Gov. Tony Evers has declared Nov. 14-18 Winter Weather Awareness Week in Wisconsin.

“Wisconsin winters can be dangerous, which is why it’s so important to have a plan and to be ready before there is snow in the forecast,” said Wisconsin Emergency Management Administrator Greg Engle. “Take time now to get your vehicle ready for winter weather, schedule a furnace tune-up and make sure your home emergency kit is fully stocked with essential supplies.”

According to the National Weather Service, Wisconsin experiences an average of three to six winter storms during the season. Last winter, the highest one-day snowfall total in the state of 20 inches was reported on Madeline Island in Ashland County on Feb. 20, 2022. Bayfield in Bayfield County recorded 145.9 inches of snow last winter, giving it the highest seasonal snowfall total in the state. The coldest temperature recorded in Wisconsin last winter was -34 degrees Fahrenheit on Jan. 26, 2022, in the city of Merrill in Lincoln County.

The first step to keeping safe this winter is to stay informed. Check in with the [National Weather Service](#) and other trusted local sources daily for current forecasts. When heavy snow or ice are expected, be prepared by stocking up on additional supplies, making sure you have an emergency kit at home and in your vehicle, and having a plan for what to do if you lose power at home.

While heavy snowfalls are always a concern, snow squalls can quickly put people in danger. Snow squalls are brief and intense snowstorms, where high winds can result in whiteout conditions and icy roadways. Snow Squall Warnings are a newer type of alert intended to inform people of conditions that can make travel extremely dangerous. You can find more information about these warnings at <https://www.weather.gov/safety/winter-snow-squall>.

The freezing temperatures of the winter months can be dangerous for many people, leading to cold-related illnesses and injuries such as hypothermia and frostbite. During the winter of 2021-22, there were 91 deaths and over 2,200 cold-related emergency department visits in the state. People should prepare by ensuring they are wearing weather-appropriate clothing and limiting their time outdoors during periods of extreme cold.

"While we all have to take care to avoid injury from the cold and snow, there are Wisconsinites who are especially vulnerable to injury or even death when the temperatures fall. They include older adults, infants, people without adequate heat sources or shelter and those who work and play outdoors," said Paula Tran, State Health Officer. "We encourage everyone to check on family, friends, and neighbors during the winter to make sure they're staying safe."

At home or in your car, winter emergency kits should include items such as food, water, a flashlight and batteries, and blankets. In your vehicle, include a snow shovel, extra gloves and hats, cell phone charger, and kitty litter or sand to help give your wheels traction on icy roads in case you get stuck.

Prepare your home by having your furnace serviced regularly. Check doorways and windows for signs they are allowing cold air into your home. Test carbon monoxide detectors to make sure they are working properly and have fresh batteries. Keep any free-standing heating devices away from curtains or other objects that could catch fire.

Ice and snow on the roads remain a major threat to drivers throughout the state. Last winter, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation said 38 people were killed and 3,136 were injured in crashes involving winter road conditions. Over the last five years, Wisconsin averaged 42 fatalities and 3,884 injuries each year from vehicle crashes caused by winter road conditions.

While driving in snow or ice, remain distraction-free and adjust your speed for current conditions. Use 511 Wisconsin to check travel conditions before you leave home. This information, along with live traffic cameras and traffic alerts, is accessible through the free 511 Wisconsin mobile app, on [Twitter](#), or the mobile-friendly site [www.511wi.gov](http://www.511wi.gov).

For more tips on getting ready for winter weather, visit the [ReadyWisconsin](#) website. You can also follow ReadyWisconsin on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#) for tips throughout the winter months and updates on dangerous weather conditions.

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Wisconsin Travel Info

## **Winter Driving in Wisconsin**

Many winter weather crashes are caused by driving too fast for current conditions. Also, when the first blast of winter arrives, motorists often need to "re-learn" how to drive in slippery conditions.

Prepare yourself before you get on the road with the 511 Wisconsin Traveler Information System. By downloading the free 511 Wisconsin Smartphone app, following @511WI on Twitter, or visiting [www.511wi.gov](http://www.511wi.gov) you can access these current statewide travel resources:

- Road conditions
- Travel times
- Traffic delays
- Incident alerts
- Construction closures
- Traffic cameras

511 Wisconsin is a 24/7 travel service provided through the Wisconsin Department of Transportation. Find out more at <https://511wi.gov>.

### **Winter driving tips**

- Be gentle with both the accelerator and brake and don't use cruise control in wintery conditions.
- Don't be overconfident in your four-wheel drive vehicle. You may get going quicker than others but you can't stop faster. Four-wheel drive vehicles can lose traction as quickly as two-wheel drive.
- Always wear your safety belt. You and your passengers absolutely need this protection even in low speed "fender-bender" crashes that frequently occur on slick roads.
- Leave plenty of room for snowplows. By law, you must stay back at least 200 feet from the rear of a snowplow.
- Obey Wisconsin's "move over" law, which requires drivers to shift lanes or slow down in order to provide a safety zone for a law enforcement vehicle, tow truck, ambulance, fire truck, highway maintenance vehicle or utility vehicle that is stopped on the side of a road with its warning lights flashing.
- Check and winterize your vehicles before the winter season begins. Make sure the car battery is in good shape – cold temperatures can reduce the effectiveness of a battery by 50 percent. Make sure your tires are suitable for winter driving conditions.

### **Staying safe if stranded**

- If your vehicle slides off the road, gets stuck or becomes disabled, stay inside it with your seat belt fastened until a tow truck or other help arrives. If you're inside your vehicle and buckled up, you have more protection against out-of-control vehicles than you would outside of your vehicle alongside the road.
- Be easy to find by telling someone where you are going and the route you will take.
- Tie a florescent flag (from your kit) on your antenna or hang it out the window. At night, keep your dome light on. Rescue crews can see a small glow at a distance. To reduce battery drain, use emergency flashers only if you hear approaching vehicles. If you're with someone else, make sure at least one person is awake and keeping watch for help at all times.
- Walking in a storm can be very dangerous because you might become lost or exhausted while exposed to the cold and snow. Your vehicle is a good shelter.
- Avoid Overexertion. Shoveling snow or pushing your car takes a lot of effort in storm conditions. Don't risk a heart attack or injury. That work can also make you hot and sweaty. Wet clothing loses insulation value, making you susceptible to hypothermia.
- It's better to be cold and awake than comfortably warm and sleepy. Snow can plug your vehicle's exhaust system and cause deadly carbon monoxide gas to enter your car. Only run the engine for 10 minutes an hour and make sure the exhaust pipe is free of snow. Keeping a window slightly open while running the engine is also a good idea.

### **Keep a Winter Emergency Kit in Your Vehicle**

Carry a winter storm survival kit in the back seat of your vehicle (in case your trunk jams or is frozen shut) that includes:

- Blankets or sleeping bags
- Extra hats, socks and mittens
- Flashlight with extra batteries
- First-aid kit
- Shovel, booster cables and windshield scraper
- Water and high-calorie non-perishable food (raisins, candy bars, energy/protein bars)
- Sand or cat litter to use for traction
- Cell phone charger



### **Calling for help**

- If possible, call 911 on your cell phone. Provide your location, condition of everyone in the vehicle and the problem you're experiencing.
- Follow instructions. You may be told to stay where you are until help arrives.
- Do not hang up until you know who you have spoken with and what will happen next.
- If you must leave the vehicle, write down your name, address, phone number and destination. Place the piece of paper inside the front windshield for someone to see.

# Safety First - Stay Informed

The National Weather Service (NWS) issues winter storm warnings, watches and advisories. Here's what they mean and what you should do.

**Winter Weather Advisory** – There is a high confidence that a hazardous winter event will occur over a 12-hour period (e.g., 3 to 5 inches of snow) but should not become life threatening if caution is used.

**Winter Storm Watch** – Winter storm conditions including freezing rain, sleet, and heavy snow are possible within the next 36-48 hours. Continue monitoring the weather forecast.

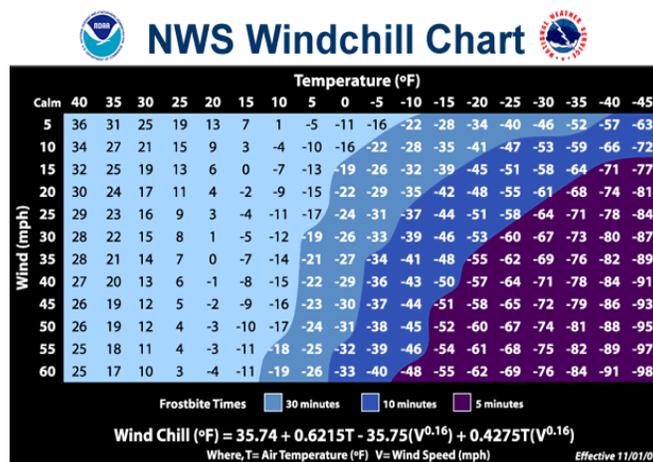
**Winter Storm or Ice Storm Warning** – A significant winter storm is occurring or will begin in the next 24-36 hours. Heavy snow (e.g., 6 inches in 12 hours) or the combination of snow, sleet, freezing rain, and moderate winds will impact travel and outdoor activities and could become dangerous or deadly. An Ice Storm Warning is issued when mostly freezing rain is expected with ice accumulations of at least ¼ inch within a 12-hour period. When a Warning is issued, take necessary precautions – consider canceling travel plans.

**Blizzard Warning** – A dangerous storm with winds that are 35 mph or greater in combination with falling and/or blowing snow that reduces visibility to 1/4 mile or less for a duration of at least 3 hours. Canceling travel plans is advised.

**Snow Squall Warning** - A short duration warning issued for a relatively small geographic area when intense short-lived bursts of heavy snowfall occur. Although rare, these snow squalls can lead to quick reductions in visibilities and often accompanied by gusty winds. Sudden whiteout conditions and slick roads can develop.

**Wind Chill Advisory** – Issued for bitter cold wind chills of 20 to 34 below zero (25 to 34 below zero in the northwest portion of the state)

**Wind Chill Warning** – Issued with wind chills of 35F below zero (40F below zero for far NW portion of Wisconsin). Frostbite is possible when outside for 10 minutes or less.



## **Know the Signs of Cold-related Illnesses**

**Frostbite** is damage to body tissue caused by extreme cold. Frostbite causes a loss of feeling and a white or pale appearance in extremities such as fingers, toes, ear tips or the tip of the nose. If symptoms are detected, seek medical care immediately!

**Hypothermia** is a condition that develops when the body temperature drops below 95°F. It is very deadly. Warning signs include uncontrollable shivering, disorientation, slurred speech and drowsiness. Seek medical care immediately!

**Overexertion** is dangerous. Cold weather puts an added strain on the heart. Unaccustomed exercise such as shoveling snow or pushing a car can bring on a heart attack or make an existing medical condition worse.

**Pets** also need extra care when the temperatures fall. They should be brought inside when the temperature reaches 30°F with wind chill. Dogs and cats can get frost-bitten ears, nose and feet if left outside during bitter cold weather. Chemicals used to melt snow and ice can also irritate pets' paws – be sure to keep anti-freeze, salt and other poisons away from pets.

## **Be Prepared at Home**

Some of the dangers associated with winter storms include loss of heat, power and telephone service and a shortage of supplies. To help protect your family, now is the time to put together a disaster supply kit. Here are some items to include:

- Flashlights and extra batteries
- Battery-powered NOAA Weather Radio and a commercial radio
- Bottled water and non-perishable food that requires no cooking
- First-aid supplies
- Fire extinguisher, smoke detector and carbon monoxide detector
- If appropriate, extra medications and baby items
- If you have an emergency heating source such as a fireplace or space heater, make sure you have proper ventilation
- Make sure pets have shelter and plenty of food and water

For additional information, contact your county or tribal emergency management office, the National Weather Service or ReadyWisconsin.wi.gov.

## Check Carbon Monoxide Detectors

Carbon monoxide is the leading cause of accidental poisoning deaths in the United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control. On average, carbon monoxide poisoning sends about 500 people per year to the emergency room in Wisconsin, according to the Wisconsin Environmental Public Health Tracking Program.

To protect your family from carbon monoxide, follow these simple safety tips:

- **Make sure you have working CO detectors.** All homes and duplexes in Wisconsin are required to have CO detectors on every level including the basement, but not the attic or storage areas.
- **Have your furnace or wood-burning stove inspected annually** to make sure it is structurally and functionally sound and vents properly to the outside of your home.
- **Never run a gasoline or propane heater or a grill (gas or charcoal) inside your home or an unventilated garage.** Any heating system that burns fuel will produce carbon monoxide. Use a battery-powered detector where you have fuel burning devices but no electric outlets, such as in tents, cabins, RVs, and boats with enclosed cabins.
- **Never run a car in an enclosed space.** If a vehicle is running, you must have a door open to the outside.
- **Generators should be run a safe distance from the home.** Never run a generator in the home or garage, or right next to windows or doors.

Breathing carbon monoxide displaces the oxygen in the blood and can cause death within minutes at high levels. Symptoms of overexposure to carbon monoxide are often mistaken for the flu and include headaches, fatigue, dizziness, shortness of breath/chest pain, nausea/vomiting, and confusion. If you experience any of these symptoms, or your carbon monoxide detector sounds an alarm, head outside immediately for fresh air and call 911.

For more information on carbon monoxide poisoning, visit:

<https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/air/co.htm>



**Install and test carbon monoxide (CO) alarms at least once a month.**

CO is called the “invisible killer” because it’s a colorless, odorless, poisonous gas. Breathing in CO at high levels can be fatal.

U.S. Fire Administration | FEMA | Fire In Your Home





# Wisconsin Blizzard Events

Winter 1982-83 - Winter 2021-22

