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## **Red Cross Prepares for Winter Storm, Offers Safety Tips**

FARMINGTON, CONN., October 28, 2011 – A Winter Storm Watch is posted for most of Connecticut today, ahead of an unusually early winter storm forecast to bring heavy snow and potentially gusty winds to the state Saturday afternoon and evening. The American Red Cross is contacting volunteers across the state to determine their availability if any special assistance is needed during the storm.

“We plan ahead and prepare throughout the year so we can be ready when needed,” said American Red Cross spokesperson Paul Shipman. Shipman said the Red Cross regularly works with state and local government to coordinate planning and response efforts and will be ready to do so if any special responses are needed during the storm. “Thanks to the many volunteers who give of their time, we will be ready if needed.”

Shipman said that, just as the Red Cross is preparing, residents can take steps ahead of the storm. “Be prepared before the storm and follow some basic tips to stay safe,” Shipman said.

“Avoid unnecessary travel. If you must travel, take it slow and easy to avoid accidents. Drivers of all-wheel-drive vehicles should remember that they can’t stop any faster than people in two-wheel-drive vehicles. Allow plenty of room between you and the car in front of you.” Shipman also urged people to thoroughly clear snow from their vehicles. “Snow blowing off a hood while driving can blind you and frozen chunks of snow blowing off the roofs and trunks of cars can shatter windshields if it blows off onto following vehicles.”

In addition to hazardous driving, this storm is likely to increase the risk of power outages, as heavy ice and snow weigh down power lines and trees that are still in nearly full leaf coverage. “Power outages can be hazardous, especially in cold weather,” Shipman said “Preparing ahead of time will help you and your family get through a storm as safely as possible.”

The recent experience of extended outages after Tropical Storm Irene should remind Connecticut residents of the importance of being prepared with appropriate nonperishable food, water, batteries and a portable radio, Shipman added. “Don’t forget to charge your mobile phone ahead of the storm,” Shipman added. “You may need that phone to contact someone if the power is out.”

Shipman added that before and after the storm are important times to give blood. “Bad weather can disrupt blood drives. If you are able to give blood, please make an appointment to do so and help us maintain an adequate supply of lifesaving blood here in Connecticut. If you have an appointment to give blood and need to cancel it due to the weather, please reschedule that as soon as possible.”

**Shipman offered the following home and car storm safety tips:**

### **Stay Tuned for Storm Warnings**

- Listen to NOAA Weather Radio and your local radio and TV stations for updated storm information.

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### When a Winter Storm WARNING is issued...

- Stay indoors during the storm.
- If you must go outside, several layers of lightweight clothing will keep you warmer than a single heavy coat. Gloves (or mittens) and a hat will prevent loss of body heat. Cover your mouth to protect your lungs.
- Understand the hazards of wind chill, which combines the cooling effect of wind and cold temperatures on exposed skin. As the wind increases, heat is carried away from a person's body at an accelerated rate, driving down body temperature.
- Walk carefully on snowy, icy, sidewalks.
- Use caution shoveling snow. It is physically strenuous work, so take frequent breaks. Avoid overexertion.
- Avoid traveling by car in a storm, but if you must...
  - Carry a Disaster Supplies Kit in the trunk (**information on kits is at end of release**).
  - Keep your car's gas tank full for emergency use and to keep the fuel line from freezing.
  - Let someone know your destination, your route, and when you expect to arrive. If your car gets stuck along the way, help can be sent along your predetermined route.

### If You Get Stuck While Traveling

- Stay with your car. Do not try to walk to safety.
- Tie a brightly colored cloth (preferably red) to the antenna for rescuers to see.
- Start the car and use the heater for about 10 minutes every hour. Keep the exhaust pipe clear so fumes won't back up in the car.
- Leave interior lights on when the engine is running so that you can be seen.
- As you sit, keep moving your arms and legs to keep blood circulating and to stay warm.
- Keep one window away from the blowing wind slightly open to let in air.

### What to Do After a Winter Storm

- Listen to local radio or television stations or a NOAA Weather Radio for updated information and instructions. Access may be limited to some parts of the community, or roads may be blocked.
- Help neighbors who may require special assistance – infants, the elderly and people with disabilities.
- Avoid travel until conditions have improved. Roads may be blocked by snow or emergency vehicles.
- Avoid overexertion. Heart attacks from shoveling heavy snow are a leading cause of deaths during winter.
- Follow forecasts and be prepared when venturing outside. Major winter storms are often followed by even colder conditions.
- Give blood! Storms and severe weather can affect the number of blood drives and donors attending those drives. Please make time in the days after a storm to give blood to maintain an adequate supply.

### If you haven't already, think about preparing for next time. Ready a Disaster Supplies Kit with:

- First aid kit and essential medications.
- Battery-powered NOAA Weather radio, flashlight and extra batteries.
- Canned food and can opener.
- Bottled water (at least one gallon of water per person per day to last at least 3 days).
- Extra warm clothing, including boots, mittens, and a hat.
- Assemble a Disaster Supplies Kit for your car, too.

### What to do in a power outage:

- Only use a flashlight for emergency lighting; never use candles
- Turn off electrical equipment you were using when the power went out
- Avoid opening the refrigerator and freezer unnecessarily to preserve food
- DO NOT run a generator inside a home or garage
- If you use a generator, connect the equipment you want to power directly to the outlets on the generator. DO NOT connect a generator to a home's electrical system – that's a job for a professional electrician.
- Keep tuned to local radio and television for updated information

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**Tips on staying warm during an outage:**

- Mittens provide more warmth to your hands than gloves.
- Most of your body heat is lost through your head, so wear a hat, preferably one that covers your ears.
- Dress in warm layers so you can remove items if you get too warm.
- Recognize the symptoms of hypothermia that can be a serious medical condition: confusion, dizziness, exhaustion and severe shivering. Seek medical attention immediately if you have these symptoms.

**More information about storm safety and about disaster supplies kits is available at [www.ctredcross.org](http://www.ctredcross.org).**

**About the American Red Cross:**

*The American Red Cross shelters, feeds and provides emotional support to victims of disasters; supplies nearly half of the nation's blood; teaches lifesaving skills; provides international humanitarian aid; and supports military members and their families. The Red Cross is a charitable organization — not a government agency — and depends on volunteers and the generosity of the American public to perform its mission. For more information, please visit [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org) or join our blog at <http://blog.redcross.org>.*

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