



**PUBLIC EDUCATION
SECTION**



HOT TOPICS
FIRE SAFETY INFORMATION SHEET

**Winter Storm
SAFETY TIPS**

Winter storms can have an impact on a community or the entire region for days, weeks or even months. Storm effects, in Vermont, include large snow accumulation, extremely cold temperatures, heavy, wet snow or icing on trees and power lines, as well as roof collapses.

The Division of Fire Safety, and local fire officials would like to remind all Vermonters to use the following safety tips during winter weather events to help protect your love ones and to prevent needless deaths and injuries.

GENERAL SAFETY AND PREPAREDNESS

- Take an extra minute to ensure all of your homes fire safety devices are properly located and functioning and that you have a family escape plan in case a fire occurs.
- Locate Smoke and CO alarms according to the manufacturer instructions
- Make sure your pipes are insulated. If your pipes freeze know where the water shut off is and never use a torch or other open flame to thaw the pipes out. A blow dryer is one safe way to take care of the problem.
- If you lose power, keep your fridge and freezer closed to keep food cold and safe. A closed fridge will keep food for about four hours. A full freezer will keep the temperature for about 48 hours, a half-full freezer for about 24 hours. Don't cook and eat meat, poultry, fish, eggs or other refrigerated foods that have been above 40 degrees F for two hours or more. They can be contaminated with bacteria that can cause serious illness.

HEATING

When using an alternative heat source, follow operating instructions, use fire safeguards and be sure to properly ventilate.

Never use your oven or stove for heating. Ovens and stoves are not designed to heat your home.

Keep anything that can burn at least three feet away from any heat source. Dispose of wood ashes in a metal container that can be tightly closed, douse with water, place the closed container outside your home away from combustible materials and leave in the container for several days before disposing of them.

Most chimney fires occur because of a build-up of creosote, a tarry by-product of burning wood. Have your chimney flue cleaned before each heating season. Burn only dry well seasoned hardwood to reduce creosote accumulation.

GENERATOR SAFETY

If you use a generator, it is critical that proper safety precautions be taken. Always read and follow all manufacturer operating instructions. Operate portable generators only in dry areas outdoors, in well-ventilated areas away from all doors, windows, vents, and other building openings to prevent exhaust fumes from entering the home.

Never attach a temporary generator to a circuit breaker, fuse, or outlet. Generators should be wired into a house by a qualified electrician using a transfer switch in order to prevent feeding electricity back into overhead power lines.

If you are using a portable generator, make sure you have battery operated carbon monoxide (CO) alarms or plug-in CO alarms with a battery backup in the home.

⚠ DANGER

Using a generator indoors **CAN KILL YOU IN MINUTES.**
Generator exhaust contains carbon monoxide. This is a poison you cannot see or smell.

NEVER use inside a home or garage, EVEN IF doors and windows are open.		Only use OUTSIDE and far away from windows, doors, and vents.

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VENTS & GAS METER SAFETY

Check the vents for your heating system to make sure they are not blocked by snow; take a close look at direct vents that are located lower down on walls. A blocked vent can lead to Carbon Monoxide backing up into your home.

Keep Gas Meters Clear of Snow and Ice, when snow and ice accumulates around gas meters, it can limit emergency access and interfere with equipment operation.

Be careful when removing snow or ice. Do not push or pile snow around meters. Shovels and snow blowers can damage your meter. Make sure those who plow snow know the location of your meter



PREVENT FROZEN PIPES SAFELY

When the weather is very cold outside, let the water drip from the faucet served by exposed pipes. Running water through the pipe – even at a trickle – helps prevent pipes from freezing because the temperature of the water running through it is above freezing.

Open kitchen and bathroom cabinet doors to allow warmer air to circulate around the plumbing. Be sure to move any harmful cleaners and household chemicals up out of the reach of children.

Keep the thermostat set to the same temperature both during the day and at night. By temporarily suspending the use of lower nighttime temperatures, you may incur a higher heating bill, but you can prevent a costly repair job if pipes freeze and burst.

Never thaw frozen pipes with a blow torch or other open flame. Use hot water or a UL listed device such as a handheld dryer.



HEAVY SNOW SAFETY

During heavy snow events avoid traveling unless necessary and always slow down and allow yourself extra time to get to your destination.

Watch for and expect changing road conditions, black ice, blowing snow, high winds or whiteout conditions can appear when you least expect them to.

When you go to work, check to see if the emergency exits are clear if you smell unusual odors or hear strange sounds that might be a clue to a possible problem, let someone know.

During heavy snow events inspect barns and other buildings for signs of wreaking or collapse. Utilize safe practices when removing snow buildup on roofs.

The removal of snow accumulations on roofs, which will take the weight off the roof, is the best way to prevent a loss. It is important to follow proper snow-removal procedures. A plan should be developed based on your building's layout. Improper snow removal can create undesired loading on a roof.

Follow these procedures to properly remove snow from your roof:

1. Use a snow roof rake if at all possible. This allows you to be safely on the ground in a safe place.
2. Use fall protection equipment when employees are working on a roof.
3. If ladders are used, locate and secure them so they do not fall.
4. Drifted snow should be removed first, which will generally be on lower roofs. Drifted snow can also occur around rooftop mechanical vents, skylights, parapet walls and around penthouse walls.
5. Remove snow in narrow strips instead of large areas to help keep loading somewhat uniform.
6. It is important to remove snow evenly from both sides of the roof so that the live load on one side of the roof is not significantly greater than the other side. For peaked roofs, the snow should be removed from the center of a given bay on one side of the roof and then the snow should be removed on the same bay on the other side of the ridge or peak.
7. Do not pile snow from upper roofs onto lower roofs.
8. Take care while removing snow and/or ice accumulation to prevent damage to the roof membrane. Use plastic shovels or wooden roof rakes to avoid damage. The uses of snow blowers are discouraged.
9. When removing snow from one section of a roof, avoid traveling over and compacting snow on adjacent roof sections.
10. Cordon off the deposit area on the ground and monitor the area to ensure that pedestrians or vehicles do not enter this area.