



Press Release

Pat Quinn, Governor
Andrew Velasquez III, Director

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IEMA Urges People to Prepare for Snow, Cold and Ice during Winter Storm Preparedness Week

Illinois averages five severe winter storms per year

SPRINGFIELD – Despite November’s balmy start, Illinois residents can be assured that the cold temperatures, snow and ice that define Midwestern winters are just around the corner. That’s why the Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA), the National Weather Service (NWS) and the American Red Cross (ARC) are urging everyone to prepare for winter’s wrath during Winter Storm Preparedness Week Nov. 15-21.

According to the NWS, Illinois experiences around five severe winter storms each year. However, during the winter of 2007-08, there were 16 severe winter storms, five of which impacted one-third or more of the state. In fact, there has not been a winter in Illinois without at least one severe winter storm in the past century.

“It’s really not a question of ‘if’ we’ll have bad weather this winter, but rather ‘when’ it will occur,” said IEMA Director Andrew Velasquez III. “As we’ve seen in recent winters, these storms can down power lines and close roads, stranding people in their homes or cars. A few minutes spent preparing today can help keep you and your family safe when bad weather strikes.”

During Winter Storm Preparedness Week, IEMA will post daily preparedness tips on the state’s Ready Illinois Facebook page and Ready Illinois website (www.Ready.Illinois.gov). The tips will address steps people can take to be prepared at home and in their vehicles.

“The American Red Cross urges families to create disaster supplies kits to have on-hand for the winter months for their homes and vehicles. Critical items for the kits include a flashlight with extra batteries, non-perishable food, water, blankets and first aid supplies” said Roger Dahl, Chief Executive Officer of the American Red Cross, Illinois Capital Area Chapter.

A home preparedness survival kit should sustain a family for at least three days, preferably longer. Additional recommended items include a NOAA weather radio (with extra batteries), extra medications and special items for babies, the disabled or elderly.

"Don't let winter weather catch you unprepared, especially this time of year when many people travel around the holidays," said Chris Miller, Warning Coordination Meteorologist for the NWS in Lincoln. "The smallest patch of ice or snow on the roads could cause an accident or strand you on the side of the road for hours. Having a disaster kit in your auto is an absolute must when traveling in Illinois during the winter months."

Winter vehicle disaster kits should include:

- Cell phone and charger
- First aid kit
- Water and high-calorie, non-perishable food
- Boots, hats, gloves and extra clothing to keep dry
- Blanket
- Crank radio and flashlight
- Sack of sand or cat litter
- Shovel
- Windshield scraper and brush
- Tool kit
- Tow rope
- Booster cables
- Compass and road maps
- A small can and waterproof matches to melt snow for drinking water

For more details about cold weather hazards and how to prepare your home and vehicle for winter, IEMA, NWS and ARC have prepared a *Winter Storm Preparedness Guide*. The guide is available on the Ready Illinois website at www.Ready.Illinois.gov or by calling IEMA at 217-785-9888. Additional information about winter storm preparedness also can be obtained by calling your local emergency management agency or American Red Cross chapter.