



# Cold Wave/Ice Storms

Ice storms can occur from early fall to late spring depending on the geographic location. Winter storms can bring heavy snow, wind, freezing rain, ice, and severe cold waves. Temperatures can drop dramatically during a storm and cause serious damage to roadways, personal property, and community services.

## How it Might Impact Your Utility Service

- Loss of power due to downed trees, downed utility poles, and towers.
- Loss of communication infrastructure.
- Loss of heat.
- Damage to water mains and pipes.
- Damage to residential and commercial utility lines.
- Restricted access to facilities due to debris, snow, and ice resulting in service restoration delays.
- Extended cold weather can cause lakes and rivers to freeze. A rise in the water level or thawing afterward can break the ice into large sections that become jammed. Ice jams can act as a dam, resulting in severe flooding and destruction of homes, roadways, and personal property.



## ALERTS

The National Weather Service (NWS) within the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) issues fire weather watch notices. Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA): WEAs, made available through the Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS) infrastructure, are just one of the ways public safety officials can quickly and effectively alert and warn the public about serious emergencies. To ensure your device is WEA-capable, check with your service provider.

**Integrated Public Alert and Warning Systems (IPAWS):** Created by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, IPAWS leverage national emergency communication channels to provide area-specific alerts in times of emergency.

**Automated Weather Alerts:** With CivicReady Automated Weather Alerts, notifications are automatically dispersed as soon as an alert is activated by the National Weather Service.

**Nixle:** Almost every city sends out Nixle alerts. They range from simple alerts about crimes and community notices to major alerts regarding disasters. It is a good idea to sign up for all applicable alerts in your area.

**Outage Alerts:** Stay informed by signing up for outage alerts with your utility service providers. The utility will contact you when there is an outage in your area and let you know when service is expected to be restored. Choose to be notified by text, phone, or e-mail.

## BEFORE COLD WAVES AND ICE STORMS

- Gather emergency supplies in the event you experience long periods without power and heat. Include important items like non-perishable food, water, a battery-operated or hand-crank radio, extra flashlights and batteries, blankets and warm clothes. Keep an emergency kit in your vehicle in case of evacuation.
- Create a Family Communication Plan. The communication plan should address aid for someone with a disability; care of children, seniors, and pets; and where to meet if you get separated. Include emergency contacts for work, daycare, school, and your **utility service providers**.
- Download the Red Cross Emergency! App. It is free and allows people to receive alerts for their local city but also alerts for cities of where you family/contacts live and a built-in "Are you okay?" feature for easy and quick check-ins.
- Know how to shut off your water line to prevent freezing pipes and water leaking in your home.
- Find alternative means of warming your home if you lose power and heat.
- If you have a wood stove, have plenty of wood available for burning.
- You can use a space heater if you have one.
- If using a generator, place it at least 20 feet from any window, vent, or door. Buy extra gasoline for your generator and vehicle.
- Review your homeowners or renters insurance policy to ensure that your coverage includes personal belongings and property.

## DURING COLD WAVES AND ICE STORMS

- Stay inside. Avoid going outdoors or driving in the event of a severe ice storm. Car accidents are the number one cause of deaths from winter storms. Bridges and overpasses are usually the most dangerous because they freeze before other surfaces. If you must drive, do so very carefully, as road conditions may be extremely dangerous.
- Make sure flashlights and battery-powered radios are working and keep extra batteries, candles, and matches on hand.
- Keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed. If you lose power, frozen food will generally keep for 48 hours. Discard perishable food that has been at 40 degrees for more than two hours.
- If it seems likely that your home will be without heat for several days, drain your water pipes and shut off your main water line.
- Close off unused rooms in your home to keep heat centralized. Put towels and rags under cracks in doors and close your blinds and curtains to keep heat from escaping through your windows.
- Wear extra clothing and use blankets and sleeping bags to keep warm.
- To avoid carbon monoxide poisoning, do not heat your home with your oven, stove, grill, or propane heater.
- Bring your pets inside.

## **AFTER COLD WAVES AND ICE STORMS**

- Check with your community on warming shelters if you need one. A list of shelters in your area can be found through the American Red Cross or by texting SHELTER and your ZIP code to 43362 (4FEMA).
- Monitor local news reports via battery operated radio, TV, social media, and cellphone text alerts for emergency information and instructions.
- If you signed up for outage alerts, you should receive notification and updates from the utilities when services will be restored. If not, contact your utility service provider.
- Search for water leaks both inside and outside your home as you may have frozen pipes from a cold wave. Test drains and toilets, as well as faucets, to make sure the water flows correctly and is clear. Contact a plumber if necessary.