

Emergency Preparedness

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Winter is Coming; Are You Ready?

Winters in Virginia often are cold, snowy and icy and can bring power outages. To highlight the importance of being winter-ready, the National Weather Service and the Virginia Department of Emergency Management set aside the week of Nov. 30 - Dec. 6 as Winter Preparedness Week.

The pre-Thanksgiving snow was a gentle reminder that whether we are ready or not, we do have the chance for snow – as well as ice and freezing temperatures – throughout the winter months.

“A significant winter storm is possible any winter in Virginia, even during those winters with overall temperatures near or above normal,” said Bill Sammler, NWS warning coordination meteorologist. “If the El Nino weather pattern happens as expected, then Virginia residents should anticipate storminess and a wetter than normal winter overall. El Nino winters are generally not snowier, but they can be, if atmospheric conditions are right. A recent example is the 2009-10 winter.”

Learn more about winter storms and extreme cold online at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/emergency/hazards/winter-storm-snow-cold.htm. And get tips on how to make a kit, make a plan and stay informed.

Reprinted from the Fairfax County emergency information blog, www.fairfaxcounty.gov/emergency.

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Place your tree away from fireplaces, heaters and other heat sources. Don't use candles on or near the tree. If you have a live tree, keep it in a sturdy base filled with water and check the water level every day.

Preventing Hypothermia

Some parts of the country received an early dose of heavy snowstorms and plunging temperatures. These cold temperatures can make your body lose heat faster than it's produced. This condition results in abnormally low body temperature, also known as hypothermia.

Hypothermia affects the brain, leaving the person unable to think clearly or move well. This makes hypothermia particularly dangerous because individuals experiencing it may not know that it's happening.

Individuals most often affected by hypothermia include:

- Older adults with inadequate heating, food or clothing.
- Babies sleeping in cold rooms.
- People who remain outdoors for long periods like the homeless, hikers or hunters.

In extreme cold, make outside trips as brief as possible to protect your health and safety. However, if you must

be outside take a few special precautions:

- Work slowly if you have to do heavy outdoor chores.
- Notify friends and family where you will be before you go hiking, camping or skiing.
- Dress warmly and in layers. A waterproof jacket will help you stay warm and dry if it starts to snow.

Do not ignore shivering. It is an important first sign that the body is losing heat.

Learn the other signs of hypothermia and how to care for someone who may be suffering from it before your next

outdoor winter excursion.

Learn more about hypothermia from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) online at www.emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/winter/staysafe/hypothermia.asp and the National Institute on Aging at www.nia.nih.gov/health/publication/hypothermia.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Dress warmly and stay dry.
- Wear a hat, scarf, and mittens.
- Avoid frostbite.
- If you have to do heavy outdoor chores, dress warmly and work slowly.
- Avoid walking on ice or getting wet.
- Notify friends and family where you will be before you go hiking, camping, or skiing.
- Avoid traveling on ice-covered roads, overpasses, and bridges if at all possible.
- If you are stranded, it is safest to stay in your car.

Graphic courtesy of CDC. Learn more about hypothermia from CDC online at www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/winter/duringstorm/outdoorsafety.asp.

Recipe for Fire-Safe Cooking

- Keep an eye on what you fry.
- Stand by your pan.
- Turn pot handles toward the back of the stove.
- Wear short sleeves or roll sleeves up.
- Keep a pan lid or cookie sheet nearby to cover the pan if it catches on fire.

Cooking is the main cause of home fire and fire injuries. By practicing these fire-safe tips, you can prevent cooking fires and keep your family safe.

For more information and resources, visit: www.usfa.fema.gov/FPW

U.S. Fire Administration FEMA

www.usfa.fema.gov/downloads/pdf/publications/kitchen_fires_recipe_card.pdf

Season's Greetings
Fire Safety and Your Tree

- Keep tree base immersed in water.
- Do not permit smoking near the tree.
- Use only lights that are U.L. approved.
- Use flame retardant decorations and paper.
- Inspect lights for frayed or cracked wiring, broken plugs, and defective sockets.
- Unplug lights at night and when leaving the home.
- Remove the tree soon after the holidays—before the needles dry out.

Get a copy of these tips from www.fairfaxcounty.gov/fr and search for "fire safety and your tree."



Fairfax County, Va., publication.

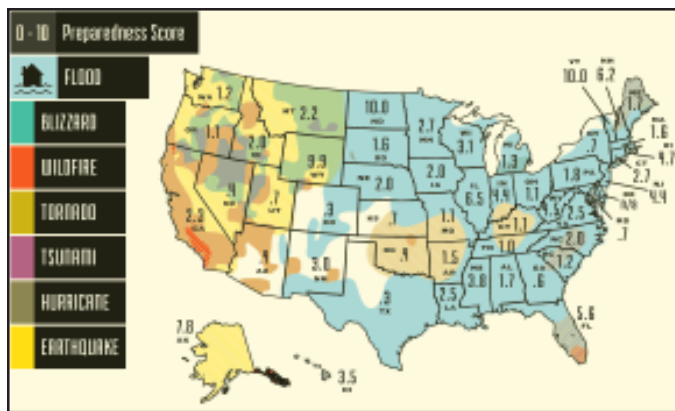
To request this information in an alternate format, call 571-350-1000, TTY 711.

How Prepared is Virginia – or any Other State?

The Prepper Feed blog from *foodstorage.com* recently posted an article, along with an interactive map and ratings for all 50 states on how prepared each state was for a series of events, such as flood, blizzard, hurricane, earthquake, etc.

According to the article, “No matter which state you live in, there is always a potential for natural disaster.” Further they report that, “some states carry higher risk than others but most states are under-prepared to handle the aftereffects of an emergency.”

Below is a screen shot of one of the preparedness maps, for a flood. Find the article, map and complete state-by-state risk score online at www.foodstorage.com/prepperfeed/blog/disaster-preparedness-how-does-your-state-rank/.



Graphic courtesy of the Prepper Feed Blog at www.foodstorage.com.

Outreach Events December & January

- **Dec. 1** – Fairfax County Small Business Commission Emergency Preparedness Presentation
- **Dec. 3** – Mason District Community Resilience pilot program, seminar and exercise
- **Dec. 4** – Winter Preparedness Webinar for Department of Homeland Security National Protection and Programs Directorate employees
- **Dec. 5** – Herndon/Reston Senior Safety Summit
- **Dec. 9** – Child Care Emergency Preparedness Workshop
- **Dec. 15** – Braddock District Community Resilience pilot program, seminar and exercise
- **Dec. 18** – Faith Communities in Action meeting
- **Jan. 6** – St. Andrew the Apostle School Parent/Teacher Organization emergency preparedness presentation
- **Jan. 7** – Annandale National Association of Retired Federal Employees (NARFE)
- **Jan. 12** – Disability Services Board meeting
- **Jan. 14** – Braddock District Senior Safety Summit
- **Jan. 15** – Faith Communities in Action meeting
- **Jan. 20** – Springfield District Senior Safety Summit
- **Jan. 22** – Fairfax County Citizen Corps Council meeting

To learn more about emergency preparedness or having an OEM representative attend your event or give a presentation at your homeowners association or civic association meeting, call 571-350-1000, TTY 711; email oem@fairfaxcounty.gov.



Office of Emergency Management
4890 Alliance Drive, Fairfax, VA 22030
571-350-1000, TTY 711

Secured Shopping

October marked the 11th Annual National Cyber Security Awareness Month sponsored by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to raise awareness about cyber risks and online safety. www.dhs.gov/national-cyber-security-awareness-month-2014

As the holiday season approaches, many customers who want to avoid long lines and crowds in stores prefer online shopping to complete their gift lists. While the Internet offers convenience, it also provides opportunities for hackers to access personal and financial information from unsuspecting shoppers.

Hackers use three common techniques to take advantage of online shoppers:

- Targeting vulnerable computers.
- Creating fraudulent sites and email messages.
- Intercepting insecure transactions.

Don't let holiday hackers ruin your holiday shopping and activities. Here are a few tips to stay safe while shopping online:

- Keep personal information private and passwords secure.
- Use secure websites for purchases. Look for the locked padlock icon at the bottom of the screen or "https" in the URL address.
- Shop with companies you know.
- Use anti-virus software, a firewall and anti-spyware software.

Cyber security is a shared responsibility. Visit Stop.Think.Connect. at www.dhs.gov/stopthinkconnect for more ideas on how to make using the Internet a safer experience this gift-giving season and throughout the year!



Home fires are more prevalent in winter than in any other season. Winter fires can be prevented! This video can help you maintain a fire-safe home this winter season. www.youtube.com/watch?v=1UXLRvu61Gc

Home Heating Safety

With colder temperatures, people begin heating their homes. No matter if it's a space heater, fireplace or wood stove, it is important to remember heating fire safety. Each year there are more than 53,000 home fires due to heat sources. Space heaters are responsible for one-third of home heating fires and four out of five home heating fire deaths.

To keep safe from fire, be sure to follow these fire safety tips:

- Keep anything that can burn a minimum of 3 feet away from heating equipment, such as the furnace, fireplace, wood stove or portable heater.
- Never use an oven for heating.
- Turn portable heaters off when leaving the room or going to bed.
- If a fireplace is used, make sure it has a sturdy screen to prevent sparks from flying into the room.
- For wood-burning stoves, install chimney connectors and chimneys following manufacturer's instructions or have a professional do the installation.
- Make sure all fuel-burning heaters are vented to the outside to avoid carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning.
- Install CO alarms to avoid the risk of CO poisoning.

As always, ensure there is a smoke alarm and CO alarm on every level of the home, inside and outside sleeping areas. Test smoke alarms every month. Have a home fire escape plan and test the plan at least twice a year to ensure everyone knows how to escape the home if there is a fire.

Contingency Fund for Ebola Response

Governor Terry McAuliffe recently announced that he has created a contingency fund of up to \$2 million to help address specific public health and safety risks associated with the exposure to or threat of exposure to Ebola.

“There have been no confirmed cases of Ebola in Virginia, but my administration continues to prepare so that we can respond quickly to this public health threat if it reaches our state,” McAuliffe said.

The governor is using the authority given to him in the Appropriation Act to grant supplemental funding for state agencies where a delay in action will produce a threat to life, safety, health or property. (Section 4-3.01 a.2.c. of Chapter 2 of the 2014 Special Session 1)

Read more from the governor’s website: <https://governor.virginia.gov/newsroom/newsarticle?articleId=7214>



Stay Connected to Emergency Information



Fairfax County Emergency Alerts
www.fairfaxcounty.gov/alerts



Emergency Information Blog
www.fairfaxcounty.gov/emergency/blog



Fairfax County Government Radio
www.fairfaxcounty.gov/radio



Fairfax County on Twitter
www.twitter.com/fairfaxcounty



Fairfax County on Facebook
www.facebook.com/fairfaxcounty



Fairfax County on YouTube
www.youtube.com/fairfaxcountygov

The Fairfax County Citizen Corps

harnesses the power of individuals through education, training and volunteer service to make communities safe, stronger and better prepared to respond to the threats of terrorism, crime, public health issues and disasters of all kinds. There are five core programs:



Volunteers in Police Service (VIPS)

Provides support for the police department by incorporating volunteers so that law enforcement professionals have more time for frontline duty. VIPS includes auxiliary police officers, administrative volunteers, and the Citizen’s Police Academy.
www.fairfaxcounty.gov/police/getinvolved/120711volunteers.htm



Neighborhood Watch

Brings private citizens and law enforcement together to reduce crime and improve the quality of life in our neighborhoods. It brings to life the simple concept of neighbors watching out for neighbors. Volunteers may join an existing group or establish one in their neighborhood.
www.fairfaxcounty.gov/oem/citizencorps/nw.htm



Medical Reserve Corps (MRC)

The Medical Reserve Corps is composed of medical and non-medical volunteers of the Fairfax County Health Department that could support the Health Department if called upon to prepare for, respond to and recover from natural and man-made disasters and emergencies.
www.fairfaxcounty.gov/MRC



Community Emergency Response Team (CERT)

Trains people in neighborhoods, workplaces, and schools in basic disaster response skills, such as fire suppression and search and rescue, and helps them take a more active role in emergency preparedness.
www.fairfaxcounty.gov/fr/cert



Fire Corps

Volunteers are trained to perform non-operational administrative duties at the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department Headquarters and at volunteer fire stations.
www.fairfaxcounty.gov/oem/citizencorps/firecorps.htm



Business Preparedness Corner

Winterize Your Business

By Whitney Kazragis

Winter weather is here and now is the time for businesses to prepare. Make it a priority to educate employees on winter weather terminology, review organizational telework policies for weather events and make sure your office is stocked with necessary items for shelter-in-place. People are one of the most critical assets for any business, so they need to be ready at home, work and on the road in order to get to work before weather conditions worsen.

Think Through These Questions With the Business Leadership Team

- Are employees prepared?
- Are emergency personnel pre-identified?
- How will communication occur with employees, vendors, subcontractors and clients if business operations are impacted?
- Can employees shelter-in-place at work if necessary?
- Are there enough supplies?
- How will walkways be safely cleared after it snows?

If business leaders or employees can't answer these questions, it's time to get to work! Make a plan and review other resources at www.ReadyNOVA.org or www.ready.gov/business.

Winter Weather: Do You Know the Terminology?

Know the terms used to describe changing winter weather conditions and what actions to take. These terms – advisory, watch and warning – can be used to determine the timeline and severity of an approaching storm.

The National Weather Service (NWS) also issues advisories and warnings for other winter weather, including blizzards, freezes, wind chill, lake effect snow and dense fog. Be alert to weather reports and tune in for specific guidance when these conditions develop.

Freezing Rain - Rain that freezes when it hits the ground, creating a coating of ice on roads, walkways, trees and power lines.

Sleet - Rain that turns to ice pellets before reaching the

ground. Sleet also causes moisture on roads to freeze and become slippery.



Whitney Kazragis

Wind Chill - Wind chill is the temperature it “feels like” when you are outside. The NWS provides a Wind Chill Chart to show the difference between air temperature and the perceived temperature and the amount of time until frostbite occurs. For more, visit www.nws.noaa.gov/om/winter/windchill.shtml.

Winter Weather Advisory - Winter weather conditions are expected to cause significant inconveniences and may be hazardous. When caution is used, these situations should not be life threatening.

Winter Storm Watch - A winter storm is possible in your area. Tune in to NOAA Weather Radio, commercial radio, or television for more information. The NWS issues a winter storm watch when severe winter conditions, such as heavy snow and/or ice, may affect your area but the location and timing are still uncertain. A winter storm watch is issued 12 to 36 hours in advance of a potential severe storm. Monitor alerts, check your emergency supplies and gather any items you may need if you lose power.

Winter Storm Warning - A winter storm is occurring or will soon occur in your area.

Blizzard Warning - Sustained winds or frequent gusts to 35 miles per hour or greater and considerable amounts of falling or blowing snow (reducing visibility to less than a quarter mile) are expected to prevail for a period of three hours or longer.

Frost/Freeze Warning - Below freezing temperatures are expected.

Whitney Kazragis is the community outreach liaison with OEM and holds a master's degree in mass communication and a disaster management certificate from the University of Georgia. Information for this article is from www.Ready.gov/winter-weather.

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 Receive emergency preparedness information and emergency news by email
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Emergency Management Spring Internship

The Fairfax County Office of Emergency Management (OEM) is now accepting applications for the spring 2015 internship program.

OEM coordinates county planning, response, support and recovery efforts before, during and after large-scale events and emergencies. The agency is responsible for developing and implementing countywide programs and projects that promote disaster planning, training, mitigation, response, prevention and recovery for all-hazards.

Not only does OEM manage two emergency operations center sites, but it also coordinates numerous local and regional projects involving local, state, regional and federal partners.

The primary duty of the emergency management intern is to provide technical and administrative assistance on emergency management projects. Duties may also

include assisting staff with day-to-day operations in OEM, researching assignments and special projects, working in the Emergency Operations Center and attending meetings or community events that may occur outside normal working hours.

Application Process

Applications are due on Thursday, Jan. 15, 2015. Interviews will be held the week of Jan. 19. Internship begins in early February.

More info about the intership can be found online at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/oem/internship.

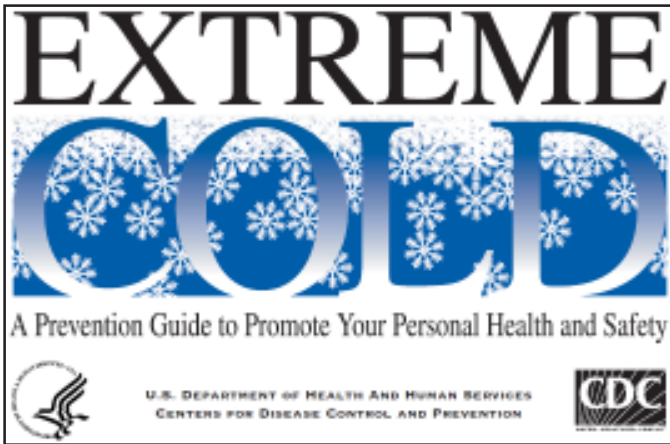


These winter weather items may come in handy if you're making a drive during the holidays: a shovel and salt/sand, ice scraper, blankets, water, extra clothing and a flashlight. Keep them in your trunk just in case. Learn more online at www.ready.gov/winter-weather and on mobile at <http://m.fema.gov/winter-storms-extreme-cold>.



Learn proper snow shoveling techniques with this video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PMMuX5drbQ4>.

The Office of Emergency Management is available to deliver emergency preparedness presentations to community organizations and homeowners associations. Contact OEM at 571-350-1000, TTY 711, or email oem@fairfaxcounty.gov if interested.



Get your copy of "Extreme Cold: A Prevention Guide to Promote Your Personal Health and Safety" online at www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/winter/pdf/extreme-cold-guide.pdf.

Lantern Live App

The Department of Energy has launched a mobile app called Lantern Live that helps consumers quickly find and share critical information about nearby gas stations and power outages during energy emergencies.

Lantern Live allows users to report the operational status of local gas stations, find fuel and look up power outage maps from local utilities, while also accessing useful tips and guidelines.

With the launch of this app, the Energy Department is testing the power of crowdsourcing and open data in disaster and recovery.

Learn more online at www.energy.gov/articles/energy-department-launches-mobile-app-energy-emergencies.



Working in Cold Weather Safety Tips

Outside temperatures this winter will be frigid; sometimes even dipping below the freezing mark. Many people work outside and should follow these simple safety tips to avoid weather-related illness or injury.

- Avoid exhaustion or fatigue; energy is needed to keep muscles warm.
- Use the buddy system — work in pairs when possible so that one worker can recognize possible danger signs.
- Wear clothing in layers that can be adjusted for changing conditions.
- Drink warm, sweet beverages (sugar water, sports-type drinks); avoid drinks with caffeine (coffee, tea, sodas or hot chocolate).

If you have questions or concerns, talk to your employer. These safety tips are provided by the Fairfax County Risk Management Division.

Winter Driving

If your travel needs call for driving in wintry weather, prepare your car for the trip by updating your vehicle emergency kit with:

- Booster cables.
- Blankets, hats, socks and mittens.
- Road salt or sand.
- A fluorescent distress flag.

While on the road, follow these driving techniques to ensure you reach your destination safely:

- Decrease your speed and leave plenty of room to stop.
- Break gently to avoid skidding.
- Do not use cruise control or overdrive on icy roads.
- Turn on your lights to increase your visibility to others.

**Get Where
You Need
to be Before
the Weather
Gets Bad**