

## SHELTERING AT HOME

### Protect yourself and your home during winter

Cold winter weather in Virginia can be challenging and dangerous. Protect yourself and your home with these tips:

- If there is a severe storm, then power outages could occur. If you can, stay in a place that has power and heat, such as a friend's home, hotel or local warming shelter.
- If you must stay home during power outages, plan now how you will stay warm. Choose a room that can be closed off and heated safely by something other than electricity.
- If you will heat with a fireplace or wood stove, have a professional check it ahead of time, especially if it has been a long time since the last cleaning. Residue can build up and cause fires.
- Portable generators and kerosene and propane heaters should be inspected and cleaned by professionals so that they work safely. Proper ventilation is essential to avoid carbon monoxide poisoning. Follow manufacturer's directions exactly when hooking them up.
- During power outages, don't use candles for light. Flashlights are much safer. Be sure to have extra batteries on hand.
- Plug space heaters into wall outlets, not extension cords. Keep space heaters at least three feet from other objects. Never leave a space heater unattended, and turn it off before going to bed.
- Keep your car's gas tank full during the winter, but it's always best to stay off roads during winter storms. Most accidents happen within the first two hours after a storm starts. If you must drive, know the road conditions before you go. Call 511 or go to [www.511Virginia.org](http://www.511Virginia.org) for around-the-clock travel information. Also, if you are going to drive in a winter storm, be sure to tell someone your destination and the routes you are going to take to get there.

It's essential that you and your family have a winter emergency plan. Here's why:

if your family cannot return home because of severe weather or closed roads, you need to decide ahead of time on meeting places away from your neighborhood. You also need an out-of-town relative or friend to be your family's point of contact for emergency communications. Learn more about **making a plan** for winter weather and all emergencies at [www.ReadyVirginia.gov](http://www.ReadyVirginia.gov).