

# Winter Storms

## Fact Sheet

### Are we at risk?

Winter weather hazards are some of the most common risks that St. Mary's County citizens face throughout the year. Exposure to the cold, vehicle crashes due to difficult driving conditions, and fires caused by improper use of heaters are just some of the emergencies that are related to winter storms.



### How To Protect Yourself At Home

#### Do...

- **Dress warmly.** Half your body heat can be lost through your head- wear a hat!
- **Inspect heating equipment.** Always follow the safety guidelines for your specific unit.
- **Purchase and correctly install a carbon monoxide alarm.** Carbon monoxide poisoning can be deadly and the alarm could save your life.
- **Check on pets** to make sure they have food, un-frozen water, and shelter.
- **Stay dry.** Being cold and wet can speed up the onset of hypothermia.

#### Don't...

- **Use candles** for lighting during a power outage. Using flashlights will help prevent a house fire. Keep plenty of spare batteries and lightbulbs on hand.
- **Use alcohol to "warm up."** Alcohol actually contributes to the onset of hypothermia.
- **Operate fuel-burning heaters or generators in an un-vented area.** Dangerous carbon monoxide gas is a product of burning fuel.
- **Use an oven range, a charcoal grill, or a clothes dryer** to heat your home.
- **Over-exert yourself.** Many cold weather activities such as shoveling snow or carrying firewood can be a strain on the heart.
- **Go outside in the storm,** unless it is absolutely necessary.

### Safe Driving Tips

**Most winter weather deaths and injuries involve motor vehicles. Use the following tips to make good decisions on the road this season.**

- Get a winter weather inspection of your car at your local service station.
- Listen to the radio or television to be informed about winter weather hazards in your area.
- Avoid driving during hazardous conditions. If you must drive, leave early and travel slowly.
- Keep at least half a tank of gas in your vehicle at all times.
- Keep an emergency supplies kit in your car. Be sure to include blankets, a small sack of kitty litter to help regain traction in snow or ice, and a brightly colored cloth to use as a flag.

*For more information:*

- St. Mary's County Health Department- 301-475-4330 or [www.smchd.org](http://www.smchd.org)
- Federal Emergency Management Agency- <http://www.fema.gov/hazard/winter/>