

# Winter Storm / Blizzard

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Heavy snowfall and extreme cold can immobilize an entire region. Even areas that normally experience mild winters can be hit with a major snowstorm or extreme cold. Winter storms can result in flooding, storm surge, closed highways, blocked roads, downed power lines, and hypothermia.

## Definitions:

**Winter Storm Watch** - A major snow and/or ice storm is developing and may arrive within 24 to 48 hours.

**Winter Weather Advisory** - Up to 6 inches of snow, light blowing snow, light sleet, and/or light freezing rain is possible over a 12-hour period.

**Winter Storm Warning** - 6 or more inches of snow or significant ice accumulation is expected.

**Ice Storm Warning** - Significant amounts of freezing rain will create 1/4" or more of ice on outdoor surfaces.

**Blizzard Warning** - Snow with sustained winds of 35 miles per hour is occurring now or can be expected soon.

**Travelers Advisory** - Roads are snow and/or ice covered, and hazardous driving conditions are possible with traffic moving at reduced speed. Drivers are urged to use caution and allow for an extended drive time.

**Snow Condition Yellow** - Hazardous driving conditions have been confirmed with heavy snow or ice, drifting snow, and limited visibility. Traffic is moving at reduced speeds with major highways being maintained in fair condition, but local roads may be impassable. Motorists are urged that if they must drive, use extreme care and allow for a significant drive time.

**Snow Condition Red** - Extremely hazardous driving conditions exist on major highways with heavy snow or ice, severe drifting, and very poor visibility. The majority of local roads are impassable. Traffic is stalling in some areas, and the storm is expected to continue or worsen. The entire road system may become completely unusable. Citizens are urged to cancel any travel plans and stay off the roads completely.

## Updated

August 3, 2011

## Source

Federal Emergency Management Agency

Michigan State Police - Emergency Management & Homeland Security Division

National Weather Service Weather Forecast Office

**More Information**

<http://www.fema.gov/>

<http://www.ready.gov/>

[http://www.michigan.gov/msp/0,1607,7-123-1593\\_3507---,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/msp/0,1607,7-123-1593_3507---,00.html)

<http://www.crh.noaa.gov/dtx/>

<http://spg.umich.edu/pdf/201.27.pdf>

## **Prevention / Mitigation / Preparedness – Winter Storm / Blizzard**

Work with the University of Michigan Office of Emergency Preparedness (734) 647-1143 and request planning guidance as needed.

During severe weather monitor local weather via a battery operated radio, a NOAA weather alert radio, the radio, the Internet, or television.

Unless it is an emergency, do not leave your home. Driving conditions will rapidly deteriorate in such a weather event.

Be aware of University SPG 201.27 on Inclement Weather and how that affects you as an employee.

Develop a disaster supplies kit, both home and car, as listed on [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov). Items such as the following are recommended:

- A shovel
- First aid kit with pocket knife
- Windshield scraper and small broom
- Necessary medications
- Flashlight
- Blanket(s)
- Battery powered radio
- Tow chain or rope
- Extra batteries
- Road salt and sand
- Water
- Booster cables
- Snack food
- Emergency flares
- Matches
- Fluorescent distress flag
- Extra hats, socks, and mittens

Dress appropriately for the weather. Wear several layers of loose fitting, lightweight, warm clothing rather than one layer of heavy clothing. The outer garments should be tightly woven and water repellent. Wear mittens, a hat and cover your mouth with a scarf to protect your lungs.

Facility managers should make sure all exterior windows and doors are securely shut to prevent frozen pipes or other property damage from occurring.

## Response – Winter Storm/ Blizzard

If you are outdoors

- Avoid overexertion when shoveling snow. Overexertion can bring on a heart attack—a major cause of death in the winter. If you must shovel snow, stretch before going outside.
- Cover your mouth. Protect your lungs from extremely cold air by covering your mouth when outdoors. Try not to speak unless absolutely necessary.
- Keep dry. Change wet clothing frequently to prevent a loss of body heat. Wet clothing loses all of its insulating value and transmits heat rapidly.
- Render first aid to those who need assistance
- Watch for signs of frostbite. These include loss of feeling and white or pale appearance in extremities such as fingers, toes, ear lobes, and the tip of the nose. If symptoms are detected, get medical help immediately.
- Watch for signs of hypothermia. These include uncontrollable shivering, memory loss, disorientation, incoherence, slurred speech, drowsiness, and apparent exhaustion.

If symptoms of hypothermia are detected:

- Get the victim to a warm location
- Remove wet clothing
- Put the person in dry clothing and wrap their entire body in a blanket
- Warm the center of the body first
- Give warm, non-alcoholic or non-caffeinated beverages if the victim is conscious
- Get medical help as soon as possible

Drive only if it is absolutely necessary. If you must drive, consider the following:

- Travel in the day, don't travel alone, and keep others informed of your schedule.
- Stay on main roads; avoid back road shortcuts.

## **Recovery – Winter Storm / Blizzard**

Your first concern after a disaster is your family's health and safety. You need to consider possible safety issues and monitor family health and well-being.

Be aware of exhaustion. Don't try to do too much at once. Set priorities and pace yourself. Get enough rest.

Be aware of new safety issues created by the disaster. Watch for washed out roads, contaminated buildings, contaminated water, gas leaks, broken glass, damaged electrical wiring, and slippery floors.

Inform local authorities about health and safety issues, including chemical spills, downed power lines, washed out roads, smoldering insulation, and dead animals. If any of these occur on U-M property, call DPS for assistance.

If the building has sustained damage contact Plant Operations (647-2059).

Be careful of downed power lines, trees, or other debris that would make for a hazardous condition.

Do not touch any downed wires or objects in contact with downed lines due to electrical hazards.

Contact the University Risk Management department (734) 764-2200 so claims management and other insurance matters can be handled.