

Winter Safety During Ice Storms

Ice storms are a common winter hazard across Ontario. Freezing rain, strong winds, and heavy ice accumulation can damage power lines, trees, and roofs, often leading to extended power outages. While restoring warmth and electricity is a priority, it's equally important to take steps to prevent fires and carbon monoxide poisoning during these events.



Prepare for Power Outages Before They Happen

Power outages during ice storms can happen suddenly and last longer than expected. Preparation helps reduce risk:

- Ensure your home has battery-operated or battery-backup smoke alarms and carbon monoxide (CO) alarms. Electrically connected alarms will not work during an outage unless they have battery backups.
- Keep flashlights or battery-operated lanterns readily available. Avoid using candles whenever possible. If candles are used, place them in sturdy holders with glass chimneys and keep them away from children, pets, and flammable materials.
- Have at least one phone that does not require electricity, as cordless phones will not work during power outages.

Generator Safety During Ice Storms

Portable generators can be useful during extended outages, but improper use can be deadly.

- Only use generators outdoors, far away from windows, doors, and vents. Never operate a generator inside a home, garage, or enclosed space.
- Ensure exhaust fumes cannot enter the home, as generator exhaust contains carbon monoxide, a colourless, odourless gas that can be fatal.
- Purchase generators with recognized approval labels, proper connection receptacles, and circuit breakers.
- Allow generators to cool before refuelling, and always refuel them outdoors, following the manufacturer's instructions.
- Store fuel for generators in approved containers outside the home.

Heating Safely When the Power Is Out

Staying warm is essential, but alternative heating sources must be used safely:

- Use only space heaters designed for indoor use and follow the manufacturer's instructions carefully.
- Provide adequate ventilation when using fuel-burning heaters by opening a window slightly.
- Turn heaters off and allow them to cool before refuelling and refuel them outside the home.
- Never bring propane or charcoal barbecues indoors, even during emergencies.

Prevent Carbon Monoxide Hazards

Ice storms and heavy snow can block vents and increase the risk of carbon monoxide build-up:

- After snowfall or freezing rain, clear snow and ice from outside vents, including those for furnaces, dryers, and fuel-burning appliances.
- Have fuel-burning appliances, chimneys, and vents inspected annually by a registered contractor. You can find one at TSSA.org
- Make sure all fuel-burning equipment is properly vented to prevent CO poisoning.

Additional Winter Fire Safety Tips

- Turn off or unplug electric stoves and small appliances during outages to prevent fires when power is restored.
- Check your dryer's outside vent annually. Lint build-up can lead to fires.
- If you use a wood-burning stove, ensure it is installed according to manufacturer instructions or by a professional, and that it is properly vented.

Stay Informed, Stay Prepared

Winter storms are unpredictable, but fire risks during ice storms are preventable. Preparing your home, using heating equipment and generators safely, and maintaining working smoke and carbon monoxide alarms can help keep you and your family safe throughout the winter season.

Always have a 72 hour emergency kit prepared and ready to take if necessary!!