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# THE NORTH COUNTRY **HEALTH** EFFECT

A health & safety guide brought to you by the Clinton County Health Department.



## Prepare for winter storms

Cold temperatures usually force us to retreat into our cozy homes—but what happens when a winter storm hits? You may lose power or be unable to travel on roadways. Listen to weather forecasts regularly and take steps to prepare your home for cold weather, storms and power outages.

## Prepare before a storm

- Sign up for local alerts and warning systems.**
- Store water in clean containers.**
- Fully charge your cell phone.**
- Make an emergency supply kit.** You should have enough supplies to sustain yourself, your family and your pets for at least 3 days (see sidebar).
- Stock food** that needs no cooking or refrigeration.
- Talk to your medical provider** about a power outage plan for medical devices powered by electricity (such as oxygen concentrators) and refrigerated medicines. Find out how long medication can be stored at higher temperatures.
- Weatherproof your home.**

## Weather terms to know

A **WATCH** means that there is a high possibility that a weather emergency will occur. When a severe storm watch is issued for your area, continue to listen to the radio or television for updates and pay attention to visible weather changes around you.

A **WARNING** means that a weather emergency is already happening, or will happen soon. When you hear a warning, take immediate action.

**“Shelter-in-place”** means to take immediate shelter where you are—at home, work, school, or in between.

## Emergency supply kit

### Basic kit items:

- water (one gallon per person, per day)
- food (several days supply)
- radio (battery powered or hand-crank)
- flashlight
- first aid kit
- extra batteries (for flashlight, radio, etc.)
- whistle (to signal for help)
- dust mask (to filter air)
- wrench or pliers (to turn off utilities)
- manual can opener
- local maps
- cell phone with charger and backup battery

### Additional items:

- soap, sanitizer or cleaner
- medications
- glasses and contact lens solution
- infant formula, diapers, wipes, etc.
- pet food and water
- cash
- important documents
- sleeping bag or blankets
- clothes and shoes
- matches
- personal hygiene items



## Act during a storm

- **Monitor the weather reports.**
- **Turn off or disconnect** unneeded appliances, equipment or electronics. Keep freezers and refrigerators closed.
- **Check on family and neighbors** who may be at a higher risk from cold weather hazards (especially young children and older adults).
- **If you have pets, bring them inside.** If you cannot bring them inside, provide adequate, warm shelter and unfrozen water to drink.
- **Throw away any perishable food** that has been exposed to temperatures 40°F or higher for 2 hours or more, or that has an unusual odor, texture or color. Never taste foods to decide if they are safe. When in doubt, throw it out!
- **If the power has been out for less than 4 hours, eat food in the order it will spoil:**
  1. Eat the food in the refrigerator.
  2. Eat food from the freezer.
  3. Start eating food from your emergency supply.

## Heat your home safely during a power outage

### Fireplace, wood stove, or kerosene heater:

- Vent all fuel-burning equipment outside.
- Use only the type of fuel designed for your heater.
- Do not store gasoline indoors—the fumes could ignite.
- Be sure there are smoke and carbon monoxide (CO) detectors near the area being heated.

### Space heaters:

- Be sure they are placed at least 3 feet from anything that may catch on fire (e.g., curtains, furniture, or bedding).
- Never cover your space heater or leave children unattended near it.
- Do not use your space heater if it has a damaged electrical cord or produces sparks.
- Never use your stove or oven as a heating source.

### Generator, camp stove or grill:

- Locate it outside and **at least 20 feet from your home.**
- Be sure it can not be reached by snow or rain—**do not use a generator if it is wet!**
- Use a single, heavy-duty, outdoor-rated extension cord to plug into your generator.





## Carbon monoxide (CO)

Often called the “invisible killer”, CO is an odorless, colorless gas. CO poisoning can cause serious health issues and even result in death. Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning include headache, dizziness, weakness, upset stomach, vomiting, chest pain and confusion.

**In 2022 there were almost 150 ER visits due to CO poisoning in Clinton County.**

In the home, heating and cooking equipment that burn fuel are potential sources of CO. If your home uses fuel to heat or cook, CO alarms should be installed in a central location outside each sleeping area and on every level of the home.

For more health & safety tips, visit [www.clintonhealth.org/nchealtheffect](http://www.clintonhealth.org/nchealtheffect) or scan the QR code.



Information in this guide was adapted from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)); the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH, [www.health.ny.gov](http://www.health.ny.gov)); and the American Red Cross ([www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org)).