

# SEVERE WEATHER PLAN

SNOW / ICE /  
WIND AND RAIN



Regional Community  
Resilience Group

**This is your Household Severe Weather Plan. It shows you some things which you can do before, during and after severe weather.**

By using this Household Severe Weather Plan it will:

- Help make you better prepared for severe weather.
- Help everyone to understand the roles of householders, the community and emergency responders.
- Leave you better informed of the dangers severe

weather poses to you and your community.

- Help you, your family and your community to, manage and recover from severe weather in your area.

### **Be Ready:**

#### **YOU SHOULD ALSO HAVE THESE READY:**

- Household Emergency Life Saving Plan
- Household Emergency Life-saving Pack
- Community Emergency Plan
- Household Flood Plan



# Be Ready:

## 1. Planning for Severe Weather

Severe weather has the ability to disrupt our daily lives, in all sorts of ways, like the loss of power and property damage. By knowing what to do to prepare, you will reduce the risks. It is important to be prepared as severe weather can happen very quickly. Here are some things you can do to prepare:

Weather conditions and warnings

- These can change quickly, so it is essential to keep up-to-date with the latest weather forecast and weather warnings from the Met Office.
- Know the **Met Office warnings**

The Met office issues Yellow, Amber and Red weather warnings. These are currently for Heavy Rain, Snow, Strong Winds, Fog and Ice. Dual warnings may also be issued for any combination e.g: Heavy rain and Strong winds or Snow and Ice.

### What The Colours Mean:

#### Yellow:

Severe weather is possible either today or over the next few days and could affect you. Yellow means that you should plan ahead thinking about possible travel delays, or the disruption of your day to day activities. The Met Office is monitoring the developing weather situation and Yellow means keep an eye on the latest forecast and be aware that the weather may change or worsen, leading to disruption of your plans.

#### Amber:

There is an **increased likelihood** of bad weather affecting you, which could potentially disrupt your plans and possibly cause travel delays, road and rail closures, interruption to power and the potential risk to life and property. Amber means you need to be prepared to change your plans and

protect you, your family and community from the impacts of the severe weather based on the forecast from the Met Office.

## **Red:**

Extreme weather is expected. Red means you should take action now to keep yourself and others safe from the impact of the weather.

Widespread damage, travel and power disruption and risk to life is likely. You must avoid dangerous areas and follow the advice of the emergency services and local authorities.

## **Impacts for Rain**

[www.metoffice.gov.uk/guide/weather/severe-weather-advice#Rain](http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/guide/weather/severe-weather-advice#Rain)

## **Impacts for Wind**

[www.metoffice.gov.uk/guide/weather/severe-weather-advice#Wind](http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/guide/weather/severe-weather-advice#Wind)

## **Impacts for Snow**

[www.metoffice.gov.uk/guide/weather/severe-weather-advice#Snow](http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/guide/weather/severe-weather-advice#Snow)

## **Impacts for Ice**

[www.metoffice.gov.uk/guide/weather/severe-weather-advice#Ice](http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/guide/weather/severe-weather-advice#Ice)

- Residents to be aware of severe weather warnings on news media or Internet.
- Residents can register for the Met Office application on their Smart Phone or Tablet device.

Further information can also be found at:

[www.nidirect.gov.uk/campaigns/be-ready-for-emergencies](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/campaigns/be-ready-for-emergencies)

# Be Ready:

## 2. Snow and Ice

### Keeping Safe and Warm

Here are some tips for keeping safe and warm:

- If you can't heat all your rooms, make sure you keep your living room warm throughout the day and heat your bedroom before going to bed.
- A balanced diet will help keep you warm and healthy in the winter. Make sure you and your family eats at least one hot meal a day.
- Wearing the right kind of clothes can help keep you much warmer. Layers are best, t-shirts and under clothes to keep the base of your back warm will heat you from the core.
- If you are out walking make sure someone knows your route and when you should be expected at your destination. This is especially important if you are walking home alone.
- Staying active is good for your health. If the weather prevents you from getting outside, stay active indoors – catch up on all the household tasks you've been putting off!



- Talk - especially if you've been stuck in the house for a few days. Lift the phone and call friends and family for a chat.
- If you have elderly relatives or neighbours who might need help, please check up on them.
- A non-mains powered landline telephone will help you stay in touch during any disruptions to your power supply.
- Make a list of all the telephone numbers you might need, and keep them handy. Here are a few to get you started.

### **Power cuts and loss of other utilities**

Power cuts and loss of other utilities including gas, water and telephones can happen during the winter, just when we need them the most. While utility companies in Northern Ireland have well tested plans in place to deal with all kinds of events, there are steps you can take now that will help you cope with any loss of utilities in future:

- A battery powered radio will help you stay in touch with the news following a power failure. Keep mobile phones and lap top computers fully charged, so you will have use of battery power for a short time at least if there is a power cut.

- If you smell gas, contact the 24hr NI Gas Emergency Service immediately on 0800 002 001
- Northern Ireland Electricity Networks: 03457 643643
- Northern Ireland Water: 03457 440088
- In an emergency always dial 999.

### **Clearing driveways or pavement outside your house**

Have a shovel and grit to hand to keep any important path ways clear. Being a good neighbour and clearing paths of ice and snow is the kind of practical step that most of us can take during cold weather. In fact, a helping hand with this can make all the difference for people who may

be unable to clear their own paths, or who need to use local paths to access services.

It's much easier to clear fresh snow, so make a start before people squash it down if you can.

Shovelling snow can be strenuous work and you should ensure that you are able, fit and well and take regular breaks.

There is no law preventing you from clearing snow and ice on the pavement outside or on paths to your house (or any other building you are responsible for):

- Provided you are careful, use common sense and don't do anything which would be likely to cause harm or distress to others, it is highly unlikely that you will be found responsible for any accidents. In fact, it's prudent to make sure your own property is safe for other people to use it. Users of areas affected by snow and ice also have responsibilities to be careful themselves.

- For everyday activities that you might do to help your neighbours, in a personal capacity, your ordinary household building or contents insurance will generally provide personal liability cover. You will need to take reasonable care, and should not take unnecessary risks. If you are in doubt, you should check your policy or ask your insurer.

### **When clearing paths you should follow this advice:**

- Do not use hot water. This will melt the snow, but could be replaced with black ice, increasing the risk of injury.
- Choose suitable clothing for the task, e.g. footwear that provides a good grip.
- Do not take unnecessary risks in the road. Traffic will find it difficult to stop quickly in icy conditions. When clearing snow and ice, wear visible clothing that helps traffic to see you.
- If shovelling snow, think about where you are going to put it, so that it does

not block people's paths or simply shift the problem elsewhere. Make sure it will not cause problems when it melts. Piling snow over gullies or drains may stop melting snow from draining away and allow it to refreeze.

- Clear a small path down the middle of the area to be cleared first, so you have a safe surface to walk on. You can then shovel from the centre to the sides.

- Spread some grit on the area you have cleared to prevent ice forming. If necessary, ordinary table salt or dishwasher salt will work, but avoid spreading on plants or grass.

Don't use too much; a tablespoon for each square metre cleared will be enough. It will take a little while to work.

- If there is no salt available, then a little sand or ash can be used. It will not have the same de-icing properties as salt but should offer grip under foot.
- Use the sun to your advantage. Removing the

top layer of snow will allow the sun to melt any ice beneath, but you will need to cover any ice with salt to stop refreezing overnight.

- Salt can be washed away by further snowfalls or rain and then refreeze, leaving black ice. If this happens more salt should be used soon after the rain has stopped and before temperatures reach freezing.
- Particular care and attention should be given to steps and steep slopes. Additional salt could be used in these areas to reduce the risk of slipping.
- Try to sweep up any excess grit, sand or other substances used come the thaw, to prevent these from blocking drains.

### **Dealing with the thaw**

After a period of severe winter weather, the thaw comes as a relief. But it has its own risks and challenges. You can prepare for these by taking some simple steps and keeping up to date on the current situation. Look out for:

- Localised flooding – Melting snow can cause localised flooding. Keep informed by tuning into local radio, TV or the internet, where public information and advice from the emergency services will be broadcast. Follow the ‘Household Flood Plan’ advice on flooding. In the event of flooding, call
- Black ice on roads and pavements – Your stopping distance is increased ten times when driving on ice. If you can put off your journey until road conditions are better then it’s a good idea to do so. If you must drive, reduce your speed and be prepared. You can also play your part by applying salt or grit to paths or pavements outside your home or business to reduce the risk of icing.

 **flooding  
incident line**  
**0300 2000 100**



- Frozen pipes – NI Water have prepared simple steps to help you beat the freeze, see:

[www.niwater.com/winter-films/](http://www.niwater.com/winter-films/)

[www.niwater.com/sitefiles/resources/pdf/simple-ways-to-protect-your-pipes.pdf](http://www.niwater.com/sitefiles/resources/pdf/simple-ways-to-protect-your-pipes.pdf)

## Avoiding Frozen Pipes

- Insulate water tanks and pipes in unheated areas like lofts, roof spaces, garages and outbuildings. This is also applicable to non domestic premises and holiday homes likely to be unoccupied and unheated for prolonged periods of time.
- Insulation is essential in helping to prevent water in pipes from freezing. It is also important to ensure there are no gaps in the insulation at bends, valves or fittings.
- Lagging material for pipes can be purchased in DIY/Plumbing stores. It should be noted that even with lagging, extreme weather conditions can result in water in pipes freezing. Without lagging however the potential for this to happen is greatly increased. Follow the link to find out how to lag your pipes - **www.niwater.com**
- Fix dripping taps - a small trickle of water can freeze and completely block the pipe.
- Find your internal stop tap/valve. It is usually but not always located under your kitchen sink and normally closes by turning clockwise. You may want to test it is working.
- Service your boiler regularly.
- Make sure doors and windows from unheated parts of your property are kept closed and minimise any draughts from outside.
- If you have tanks or pipes in the roof space, allow some warm air to circulate by opening the trap door.
- Leave the heating on low when you are away. Leave a key with a neighbour, friend or family member who can check the house regularly.

- Write down the contact details of a qualified plumber.
- If a property is not in use or occupied for a prolonged period of time it is advisable to turn the water supply off at the stop tap and even consider draining down the system to lessen the possibility of burst pipes going undetected causing property damage and the waste of water.
- Make sure you know where to locate the stop valve which controls the water supply entering your home.

## **Dealing with Frozen Pipes**

- Turn off the water supply at the stop tap/valve.
- Thaw along the pipe, starting from the end nearest the tap.
- Don't use a blow lamp or naked flame.
- Put hot water bottles or a thick cloth soaked in hot water over the frozen pipe or use a hair dryer at its lowest setting to thaw pipes. Be careful not to warm them too quickly.
- Don't leave taps dripping or running. The water may not flush down the plug hole if the pipes below are frozen.



## If a Pipe Bursts:

- Turn off the stop tap/valve.
- Try to block escaping water with thick cloth like towels.
- Turn on all taps to reduce flooding.
- If a pipe has burst in your property you can make a temporary repair using putty or a repair clamp, which can be bought from most DIY outlets. However, any temporary repair needs to be replaced as soon as possible, call a qualified plumber. NI Water recommends you use an Approved Plumbing Contractor; refer to **www.needaplumber.org** or by telephoning the Scottish and Northern Ireland Plumbing Employers Federation (SNIPEF) during normal office hours on 0131 556 0600.
- Don't forget to turn off taps once the problem is fixed to avoid further flooding.
- If you have checked the pipes on your property and they are not burst or frozen, and you still have no water supply, contact NI Water on 03457 440088.

## Blocked drains

Drains can be blocked by excess grit, leaves and other debris. Where this happens there is a risk that the blocked drains could cause localised flooding. If you see a blocked drain, help everyone in your area by reporting it to DfI Roads:

[www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/drains-gullies-and-sewers](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/drains-gullies-and-sewers)

## Thawing ice on frozen ponds, lakes, canals and rivers

Even in severe cold weather, do not assume that ice will take your weight. You have no way of knowing how safe it is. The only safe course of action is to stay off. Frozen waterways can be a particular temptation for young children and animals - keep your dog on leash, and ensure young children are supervised.

## Falling icicles and snow on guttering and roofs

If your property has large amounts of overhanging snow or large icicles, try to make

anyone entering it aware of the risk (a simple note on your door may do the job). If you are confident that it is safe to do so, you should try to remove overhanging icicles that pose a threat on your own property – but ladders should not be used in icy conditions, nor should you hang out of windows to reach roof areas. It is important to let children know of the risks of falling icicles – and of the danger of throwing snow or any other objects onto (or at) icicles or snowy roofs.

## Looking after your pets

Taking care of animals may become more challenging in cold weather. The USPCA has published winter advice for animal owners. Tips on taking care of family pets:

- Don't leave your dog or cat outdoors in freezing temperatures for long. Make sure they have a warm place to sleep, away from draughts.
- After a walk in snowy, icy or wet conditions, dry your pet off as quickly as possible and ensure it is

kept warm. Some dogs will need a properly fitting dog coat in cold weather.

- Take care of yourself when walking your dog in icy conditions, as a dog pulling on the lead can cause you to lose your balance.
- Never leave your cat or dog alone in a car during cold weather.

[www.uspca.co.uk/uspca-winter-health-tips-for-your-pets/](http://www.uspca.co.uk/uspca-winter-health-tips-for-your-pets/)

The first and most important thing to do is to check local and national **weather forecasts** and keep up - to - date with the latest **Met Office warnings**.

# Be Ready:

## 3. Strong Winds

### Before a storm

- Keep your property in a well maintained condition e.g. replace/repair any loose roof tiles, guttering, etc that could potentially come loose and cause injury or damage to property.
- Secure loose objects such as ladders, garden furniture, wheelie bins, trampolines or anything else that could be blown around.
- Close and securely fasten doors and windows.
- Park vehicles in a garage or keep them clear of buildings, trees, walls and fences.
- Ensure you are prepared should there be a power cut.

### During a storm

- Stay indoors as much as possible.
- If you do go out, try not to walk or shelter close to buildings and trees.
- Do not go outside to repair damage while the storm is in progress.
- Do not drive unless your journey is really necessary.

### After A Storm

- Be careful not to touch any electrical/telephone cables that have been blown down or are still hanging.
- Do not walk too close to walls, buildings and trees as they could have been weakened.

## LOSS OF UTILITIES

### Be prepared - Top tips

- Having a well-stocked Household Emergency Life-saving Pack at home will help until things get back to normal. This includes things like a battery operated or wind-up torch and a battery powered or wind-up radio.
- Keep mobile phones, laptops or tablets fully charged – so you will have use of battery power for a short time at least if there is a power cut.
- A non-mains powered landline telephone will help you stay in touch during any disruptions to your power supply.
- Have the telephone numbers you might need to hand.
- Get your friends and family thinking ahead and learn the steps that can be taken to be prepared.



# Be Ready:

## 4. Rain / Flooding

Flooding can happen at any time of the year, affecting your home, travel and work life. Flooding in your home is extremely distressing and upsetting. Unfortunately not all flooding is preventable. It is important to be prepared as flooding can happen very quickly even in places where it has never flooded before.

A further booklet specifically designed to assist homeowner

on things to do before, during and after flooding, this booklet is titled 'Household Flood Plan'.

### Be Ready:

#### TRAVEL

- Check the weather conditions before you set off and think about how severe weather can impact on you.
- Consider whether you need to travel right now, or if you can wait until the weather improves.



- If you're making a journey and bad weather is forecast, make a travel plan.
- There are also some everyday things you could put in your vehicle, (see later in booklet), that will stand you in good stead at any time of the year.
- Consider public transport as an alternative.
- Check to see if there is a better route.
- Make sure your car is ready for a journey.
- Tell someone where you're going and what time you expect to be there or back.
- Allow extra time for your journey.
- Fully charge your mobile phone and take a charger with you.
- Make sure you have appropriate clothing, equipment and food.
- In winter, think about getting winter tyres.

- For real-time journey information, listen to radio reports or visit the DfI website / twitter feed.

[www.trafficwatchni.com/home](http://www.trafficwatchni.com/home)

[www.twitter.com/  
TrafficwatchNI](http://www.twitter.com/TrafficwatchNI)

- For public transport information, check the Translink website / twitter feed.

[www.journeycheck.com/  
nirailways/](http://www.journeycheck.com/nirailways/)

[www.twitter.com/translink\\_  
ni?lang=en](http://www.twitter.com/translink_ni?lang=en)

# Be Ready:

## 5. Special Requirements

If you or someone in your home is dependent on a water supply or electrical equipment for daily care then you can sign up to a Care Register.

The facility is offered by both Northern Ireland Electricity (NIE) and Northern Ireland Water (NI Water).

In the event of a cut in supply, having someone on the register means that contact details are prioritised by the relevant service supplier.

They will also contact you in advance of any planned outages advising of the planned length of time that you may be affected in supply in order to allow you sufficient time to make alternative arrangements.

This service is of particular benefit for individuals who rely on medical equipment such as oxygen concentrators, home dialysis machines and vital signs monitoring equipment.

For further information on how to register, and details of which services are offered by which company, please contact the service provider directly.

Contact details are provided below:

### **Northern Ireland Electricity critical care register**

NIE Networks,  
Critical Care Register  
FREEPOST NATHN475  
Danesfort, 120 Malone Road,  
Belfast, BT95BR  
Tel: 03457 643643

[www.nienetworks.co.uk/help-advice/Critical-care-register](http://www.nienetworks.co.uk/help-advice/Critical-care-register)

### **Northern Ireland Water customer care register**

PO BOX 1026,  
Belfast,  
BT1 9DJ  
Tel: 03457 440088  
Text Relay Service: 03457  
440088  
E-mail: [waterline@niwater.com](mailto:waterline@niwater.com)

## Important emergency contact numbers

### EMERGENCY SERVICES:

999 or 112

### Northern Ireland Electricity Networks:

03457 643643

### NI Gas Emergency Service:

0800 002 001

### Northern Ireland Water:

Waterline:  
03457 440088

### Flooding Incident Line:

0300 2000 100

### Housing Executive:

03448 920 901

## Emergency travel kit

For peace of mind always carry an emergency kit in your vehicle. Your emergency kit should include:

- ✓ A first aid kit
- ✓ Battery jump leads
- ✓ A torch and spare batteries
- ✓ A map for unplanned diversions
- ✓ A blanket
- ✓ A reflective warning sign

In winter you should also take:

- ✓ An ice scraper and de-icer
- ✓ A shovel for snow
- ✓ Warm clothes, boots and a blanket
- ✓ Some food and a warm drink in a flask

