

## **Winter Storm Safety: Protecting Yourself from Carbon Monoxide During Severe Weather**

A major winter storm is expected to stretch from Texas through New England this weekend, bringing snow, ice, power outages, and dangerous conditions to millions of people. As families prepare for cold temperatures and possible disruptions, we want to remind everyone that carbon monoxide (CO) safety is a key part of winter storm preparedness.

Carbon monoxide is an invisible, odorless gas that can quickly become deadly. During winter storms, the risk of CO exposure rises sharply due to increased use of generators, fuel-burning appliances, fireplaces, and vehicles. Taking a few preventive steps now can help keep you and your loved ones safe.

### **Why Do Winter Storms Increase CO Risk?**

Severe winter weather often leads to power outages and heavy reliance on alternative heat and power sources. CO incidents commonly occur when:

- Portable generators are used incorrectly
- Vehicles are left running in garages or near homes
- Fuel-burning appliances or fireplaces are blocked by snow or ice
- Grills or camp stoves are used indoors for heating or cooking
- Car exhaust is blocked with snow

These are a few situations that can cause carbon monoxide to build up quickly, sometimes with little warning.

### **Use generators safely**

- Only use generators outdoors, at least 20 feet away from doors, windows, and vents
- Never run a generator in your home, garage, basement, or near open windows
- Make sure snow does not block the generator exhaust

### **Never use outdoor equipment indoors**

- Do not use grills, camp stoves, propane heaters, or charcoal indoors or in enclosed spaces
- These devices are designed for outdoor use only & can produce dangerous levels of CO

### **Check vents and exhausts**

- Keep furnace, dryer, and water heater vents clear of snow and ice
- Blocked vents can cause CO to back up into your home
- Ensure the exhaust pipe on your car is snow-free

### **Be cautious with fireplaces and heaters**

- Make sure chimneys and flues are open and unobstructed before use
- Never leave a fire unattended
- Only use approved fuel for your heating equipment

### **Never warm up your car in an enclosed space**

- Do not idle vehicles in garages, even with the garage door open
- Move vehicles outside immediately after starting

### **Make Sure Your Carbon Monoxide Alarms Are Working**

Working carbon monoxide alarms are one of the most effective ways to prevent tragedy.

- Install CO alarms on every level of your home and near sleeping areas
- Test alarms before the storm hits
- Replace batteries if needed

**If a CO alarm sounds, get everyone outside to fresh air immediately and call 911 or your local fire department.**

### **General Winter Storm Safety Reminders**

Keep emergency supplies on hand, including flashlights, batteries, blankets, and non-perishable food

- Dress in layers to stay warm and avoid hypothermia
- Check on neighbors, especially older adults and those with limited mobility
- Never use ovens or stovetops to heat your home