

# **SOUTH CAROLINA WINTER WEATHER**

## **Cold Weather Hazards in South Carolina: Your Winter Prep Checklist**



# **SCEMD**

A winter weather resource guide from the  
South Carolina Emergency Management Division and the State Emergency Response Team.



## WINTER WEATHER: KNOW THE TERMS

**Winter Storm Watch** is used when the risk of a hazardous winter weather event has increased but its occurrence, location, and/or timing is still uncertain (heavy sleet, heavy snow, ice storm, heavy snow, blowing snow, or a combination of events).

**Winter Storm Warning** is issued for a significant winter weather event, including snow, ice, sleet, blowing snow, or a combination of these hazards.

**Winter Weather Advisory** is issued when snow, blowing snow, ice, sleet, or a combination of these wintry elements is expected, but conditions should not be hazardous enough to meet warning criteria.

**Ice Storm Warning** is usually issued for ice accumulation of around 1/4 inch or more. This amount of ice accumulation will make travel dangerous or impossible, likely leading to snapped power lines and falling tree branches.

**Freezing Rain** is rain that freezes when it hits the ground, creating a coating of ice on roads, walkways, trees, and power lines.

**Sleet** is rain that turns to ice pellets before reaching the ground. Sleet can create dangerous driving conditions.

**Freeze Warning** freezing temperatures for an extended period are expected.

**Extreme Cold Warning** dangerously cold air temperatures or wind chill values are expected or occurring. Avoid going outside if possible.

**Extreme Cold Watch** dangerously cold air temperatures or wind chill values are possible.

**Cold Weather Advisory** issued when cold temperatures/wind chill temperatures are expected to result in significant impacts to people and/or infrastructure.

## POWER POINTERS:

- Keep a supply of blankets, warm clothing, and sleeping bags to stay warm.
- Use a battery-powered or hand-cranked radio for weather updates and emergency information.
- If you have a generator, use it only outdoors in a well-ventilated area, away from windows and doors.
- Conserve phone battery by limiting use or using a portable charger.
- Ensure all food in the refrigerator and freezer stays cold by opening only when necessary.
- Check on neighbors, especially the elderly or those with medical needs.



## SPACE HEATER SAFETY TIPS:

- Keep heaters at least 3 feet away from anything that can burn (furniture, curtains, bedding, etc.).
- Always plug electric heaters directly into a wall outlet—no extension cords or power strips.
- Never leave a space heater on while sleeping or out of the room.
- Place on a flat, hard surface to prevent tipping. Avoid carpets and high-traffic areas.
- Ensure you are using the proper fuel for the type of heater.
- Use heaters with an automatic shut-off in case of tipping or overheating.
- Unplug the heater when not in use.



## BEFORE A WINTER STORM:

- Add rock salt and shovels to your supply kit.
- Pet Safety: opt for ice melt products labeled “pet-safe.” Avoid rock salt (sodium chloride) and antifreeze as these can be harmful to pets.
- Stock up on heating fuel for potential isolation or power loss.
- Insulate pipes and let faucets drip to prevent freezing.
- Learn how to shut off water valves in case a pipe bursts.
- Service your vehicle for winter readiness.
- Keep a winter emergency kit in each vehicle, including a shovel, scraper, flashlight, radio, batteries, water, snacks, matches, extra clothing, a first aid kit, meds, blankets, tow chain, salt, booster cables, flares, and a distress flag.

## PREPARING YOUR HOME FOR WINTER WEATHER:

- Seal gaps around windows and doors to prevent drafts and heat loss.
- Clean and inspect gutters to prevent ice dams and water damage.
- Check and replace weatherstripping on doors and windows.
- Insulate pipes in unheated areas to prevent freezing.
- Stock up on winter supplies like salt, shovels, and blankets.
- Test smoke and carbon monoxide alarms to ensure they're working.



## AFTER A WINTER STORM:

- Listen to local radio or TV for weather and traffic updates.
- Go to a designated shelter if your home loses power or heat during periods of extreme cold.
- Check on your animals and ensure that snowdrifts, ice, or other obstacles do not block their access to food and water. If possible, bring them indoors.
- If alternative electricity, heating, or cooking sources are used, be aware of possible carbon monoxide poisoning, electric shock, and fire.

## HERE IN SOUTH CAROLINA:

- State Government Closings and Delays: Updated schedules for state government offices will be broadcast via SCETV and posted on [scemd.org/closings](http://scemd.org/closings).
- Monitor local media for information regarding all other winter closings: schools, municipal governments, and businesses.

## INSTEAD OF MILK & BREAD:

- **Stock non-perishables:** canned goods, pasta, rice, and shelf-stable milk.
- **Freeze meals:** Prepare and freeze soups or casseroles for easy reheating.
- **Store water:** At least 2 gallons per person per day for at least 3 days.
- **Plan for power outages:** Have a manual can opener and alternative cooking methods.
- **Limit fresh foods:** Use fresh produce quickly or freeze it.

## DURING A WINTER STORM:

- Stay indoors. If you go out, dress in layers: a scarf and waterproof insulated boots.
- Avoid overexertion when shoveling snow; stretch before and take plenty of breaks.
- Change wet clothing to prevent heat loss.
- Watch for signs of frostbite, such as the loss of feeling and white or pale appearance in extremities such as fingers, toes, earlobes, and the tip of your nose.
- Only drive if necessary. If you must, travel during the day and never alone, if possible. When driving on icy roads, drive slowly, brake softly, and increase your following distance.
- Allow time for car windows to defrost and remove ice/snow completely before driving.
- Remember, SCDOT will address major roadways first, which means driving on less-traveled roadways will likely require extreme caution for longer periods of time.
- If trapped in a winter storm, stay in your car with the hazard lights on. Run the engine for 10 minutes per hour to warm up, but keep the exhaust pipe clear.

Get real-time road conditions by dialing 511 or visiting [511sc.org](http://511sc.org) online.

## BELIEVE IT OR NOT:

- Snow and ice storms and cold temperatures periodically threaten South Carolina.
- In February 2014, there were more than 364,000 power outages statewide, which caused more than 550 people to need emergency shelter and caused more than \$260 million in damages.
- Over the last 20 years, the 2004, 2006, and 2014 ice storms caused some of the most significant presidential disaster declarations.



Stay Warm, Stay Informed:  
Visit [scemd.org](http://scemd.org) and  
download the  
**SC Emergency Manager App.**





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