



**American
Red Cross**

Connecticut Region

Chapter Headquarters

209 Farmington Avenue
Farmington, CT 06032
www.ctredcross.org

News Release
NEWS RELEASE

Contact:

Paul Shipman
Phone: (860) 678-2796
paul.shipman@ctredcross.org

Red Cross Offers Tips to Help People Dig Out Safely after the Storm

FARMINGTON, CONN., January 12, 2011 – As the winter storm that pounded Connecticut exits the state today, people will begin to dig out and resume their routines. The Red Cross is offering tips to help people dig out safely.

American Red Cross spokesperson Paul Shipman said that clearing snow from walks and driveways is hard work and should be done with care. "Shoveling is very strenuous. If you're not used to regular exercise, take it very slowly. Perhaps you can ask a neighbor to help," Shipman said. He also reminded snow blower operators to handle the machines carefully. "Clearing a blockage in your snow blower is dangerous. The blades can kick back even if they are disengaged. If you need to clear the blades or chute, turn the machine off and use a stick or broom handle to clear the blockage, and being careful not to get the stick or handle intertwined in the blades."

"The most important thing to remember is to take it slowly, when shoveling out and when traveling," Shipman said. "Travel may still be tricky, so use caution on the roads, allowing plenty of distance between you and the car ahead. Make sure your car is completely cleared of snow to prevent snow from blowing into your windshield or the windshield of vehicles following you, and that your headlights and brake lights are visible." Shipman added a special reminder for drivers of SUVs: "Remember that, while SUVs and all-wheel drive vehicles may start off more quickly than regular cars, they don't stop any faster. Allow that extra distance when driving."

Shipman said that the cold weather following the storm means that people venturing out should dress appropriately. "Wear multiple layers, which provide better warmth retention than one bulky item. Be sure you wear a hat; up to 70-percent of your body heat can be lost through your head."

Shipman said that the Red Cross prepares ahead for storms and emergencies to reduce risk and disruption of operations. "We encourage businesses and families to do the same. Let this storm be the start of your own planning process to assess what items you should have to get you through a few days without the ability to travel." Shipman said there detailed information on disaster preparedness is available at www.ctredcross.org. "Check our information and check your basic supplies, such as batteries, a flashlight, portable radio, drinking water and non-perishable food."

Shipman said that one important step that people can take to help with preparedness is to give blood. "Please make an appointment to give blood soon. Storms like this one disrupt our blood drive schedule. If you are able to give blood, please make an appointment to do so and help us maintain an adequate supply of lifesaving blood here in Connecticut. If you have an appointment to give blood and need to cancel it due to the weather, please reschedule that as soon as possible." Shipman said that blood donation appointments can be made by calling 1-800-Red Cross.

Shipman offered the following home and car storm safety tips:

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Stay Safe During the Storm

- Stay indoors during the storm.
- If you must go outside, several layers of lightweight clothing will keep you warmer than a single heavy coat. Gloves (or mittens) and a hat will prevent loss of body heat. Cover your mouth to protect your lungs.
- Understand the hazards of wind chill, which combines the cooling effect of wind and cold temperatures on exposed skin. As the wind increases, heat is carried away from a person's body at an accelerated rate, driving down body temperature.
- Avoid traveling by car in a storm, but if you must...
 - Carry a Disaster Supplies Kit in the trunk.
 - Keep your car's gas tank full for emergency use and to keep the fuel line from freezing.
 - Let someone know your destination, your route, and when you expect to arrive. If your car gets stuck along the way, help can be sent along your predetermined route.

What to Do After a Winter Storm

- Listen to local radio or television stations or a NOAA Weather Radio for updated information and instructions. Access may be limited to some parts of the community, or roads may be blocked.
- Help neighbors who may require special assistance – infants, the elderly and people with disabilities.
- Avoid travel until conditions have improved. Roads may be blocked by snow or emergency vehicles.
- Use caution when operating snow blowers. Never try to clear a blockage in the machine. You can seriously injure yourself. To clear blockages, shut down the snow blower and use the handle of a shovel or something similar to clear the machine. And never operate a snow blower or other combustion engine equipment in a closed space like a garage; carbon monoxide fumes are deadly.
- Avoid overexertion when shoveling snow. Heart attacks from shoveling heavy snow are a leading cause of deaths during winter.
- Walk carefully on snowy, icy, sidewalks.
- Follow forecasts and be prepared when venturing outside. Major winter storms are often followed by even colder conditions.
- Give blood! Storms and severe weather can affect the number of blood drives and donors attending those drives. Please make time in the days after a storm to give blood to maintain an adequate supply.

If You Get Stuck While Traveling

- Stay with your car. Do not try to walk to safety.
- Tie a brightly colored cloth (preferably red) to the antenna for rescuers to see.
- Start the car and use the heater for about 10 minutes every hour. Keep the exhaust pipe clear so fumes won't back up in the car.
- Leave interior lights on when the engine is running so that you can be seen.
- As you sit, keep moving your arms and legs to keep blood circulating and to stay warm.
- Keep one window away from the blowing wind slightly open to let in air.

If you haven't already, think about preparing for next time. Ready a Disaster Supplies Kit with:

- First aid kit and essential medications.
- Battery-powered NOAA Weather radio, flashlight and extra batteries.
- Canned food and can opener.
- Bottled water (at least one gallon of water per person per day to last at least 3 days).
- Extra warm clothing, including boots, mittens, and a hat.
- Assemble a Disaster Supplies Kit for your car, too.

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What to do in a power outage:

- Only use a flashlight for emergency lighting; never use candles
- Turn off electrical equipment you were using when the power went out
- Avoid opening the refrigerator and freezer unnecessarily to preserve food
- DO NOT run a generator inside a home or garage
- If you use a generator, connect the equipment you want to power directly to the outlets on the generator. DO NOT connect a generator to a home's electrical system – that's a job for a professional electrician.
- Keep tuned to local radio and television for updated information

Tips on staying warm during an outage:

- Mittens provide more warmth to your hands than gloves.
- Most of your body heat is lost through your head, so wear a hat, preferably one that covers your ears.
- Dress in warm layers so you can remove items if you get too warm.
- Recognize the symptoms of hypothermia that can be a serious medical condition: confusion, dizziness, exhaustion and severe shivering. Seek medical attention immediately if you have these symptoms.

More information about storm safety and about disaster supplies kits is available at www.ctredcross.org.

About the American Red Cross in Connecticut:

The American Red Cross in Connecticut helps people prevent, prepare for and respond to emergencies. Last year, more than 8,000 volunteers and a small corps of employees helped victims of nearly 500 local disasters; taught emergency preparedness and lifesaving skills to nearly 200,000 Connecticut Residents; provided international tracing and message services to more than 80 Connecticut residents seeking loved ones separated by disaster or war; and helped more than 1,400 Connecticut military families with emergency communications and other services. Nearly 100,000 Connecticut citizens gave blood through the Red Cross, which supplies blood and blood products to the State's acute care hospitals and transfusing facilities. The American Red Cross is part of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. An average of 91 cents of every dollar the Red Cross spends is invested in humanitarian services and programs. The Red Cross is not a government agency; it relies on donations of time, money and blood to do its work.

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