

Emergency Preparedness Newsletter



Department of Emergency Management and Security (DEMS)

DEMS Monthly Webinar Features VDOT!

Join us on Wednesday, December 7th at 7:00 PM to learn more about Winter Weather Safety from the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT). Ellen Kamilakis Assistant District Administrator for Communications in the Northern Virginia District. Join us to learn about how VDOT operates during winter weather and how you can stay informed during storms. Link to join webinar: <https://youtu.be/zsZ5hDZTrh0>



Winter Weather Safety

Winter is upon us in Northern Virginia! While this season can be a beautiful time of year, winter weather can cause dangerous situations if not properly prepared for. Taking time to implement weatherproofing and safety measures in your home will help you and your family stay warm and safe this season. Follow these tips to ensure a safe and cozy winter:

- Drain outdoor pipes and hoses to prevent pipes from freezing and bursting. If indoor pipes become too cold due to a power outage or extreme cold temperatures, periodically keep a small amount of water running from each faucet to prevent indoor plumbing from freezing.
- Have your home heating system inspected by a professional to ensure it is functioning properly and reduce the risk of fires.
- If you have a fireplace or woodstove, ensure the flue and chimney are free of buildup and debris prior to use.
- Remember never to leave vehicles, generators, or other appliances that omit exhaust running in enclosed spaces like a garage or shed.
- Do not place space heaters in small, confined rooms and never use a generator indoors.
- Check the batteries in your smoke and carbon dioxide detectors.
- Make sure you have a snow shovel and ice melt on hand before snow starts to fall.
- Ensure you know how to access weather information and alerts in your area. You can sign up for Fairfax Alerts for free at <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/alerts/>.
- Keep an eye on pets when they are outdoors. They are also susceptible to cold temperatures and should not be left outside for extended periods of time.



For more information on winter safety from the National Safety Council, visit <https://www.nsc.org/community-safety/safety-topics/seasonal-safety/winter-safety/winter>.

Holiday Light Safety

Holiday decorations and celebrations are an annual tradition for many families. However, dry Christmas trees, burning candles, and holiday lights can pose a real hazard if not used properly.

- Keep lit candles away from decorations and other things that can burn.
- Replace any string of lights with worn or broken cords or loose cord connections. Follow manufacturer instructions.
- Blow out lit candles when you leave the room or go to bed.
- Place trees away from fireplaces, radiators, and other heat source. Heated rooms dry trees out rapidly, creating fire hazards.

Winter Car Emergency Kit

The greatest threat from winter weather is often secondary impacts, such as traffic accidents on icy roads. Carry items in your vehicle to handle common winter driving-related supplies you might need in an emergency, including:

- Car cell phone charger
- Blanket, or emergency blanket
- Winter hat and winter gloves

It's also a good idea to keep family and emergency phone numbers, including your auto insurance provider and a towing company, in your phone.

Visit our Community Emergency Response Guide for more information! Link: [Community Emergency Response Guide | Emergency Management \(fairfaxcounty.gov\)](https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/emergency-management/community-emergency-response-guide)

Resolve to be Ready

This New Years, resolve to be ready for any emergency. Taking steps to plan for the unexpected can mean you are more equipped to protect yourself and others if a disaster happens. Resolve to be ready with these tips.

- Create an emergency plan. Know your evacuation routes and have places designated ahead of time for your family to meet up at in case you get separated.
- Put together an emergency kit to include water, shelf stable food, first aid kit, and more.
- Sign up for Fairfax Alerts to get your emergency alerts! www.fairfaxcounty.gov/alerts
- Check your insurance plan to see if you have coverage for multiple kinds of natural and man-made disasters. Remember that flood insurance is separate from your home insurance plan!
- Save for a rainy day! Start and grow your emergency fund.

Remember, preparedness is a marathon, not a sprint. Take your time and put together your plan.

FACTS

- ! **Almost one third** of home Christmas tree fires are caused by electrical problems.
- ! Although Christmas tree fires are not common, when they do occur, they are more likely to be serious.
- ! A heat source too close to the tree causes more than **one in every five** of the fires.

