

# STAY SAFE AND WARM THIS WINTER - WINTERIZE YOUR HOME AND CAR

For Release

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The official start of winter is just around the corner with a predicted forecast of a wetter winter for the mid-Atlantic states. But whatever old man winter has in store for us make sure you're prepared, at home and on the road, by taking the necessary precautions to stay safe and warm during the winter season.

## Winterize Your Home

- Furnace and Heating Ducts
  - Call an HVAC professional to inspect your furnace and clean and inspect the heating ducts.
  - Replace the furnace filter throughout the winter.
- Ceiling Fans
  - Reverse ceiling fans to rotate clockwise allowing the fan to push warm air down and recirculate throughout the room.
- Drafts/Air Leaks
  - Drafts can waste up to 30% of your energy use. Place draft guards or rolled up towels across the bottom of the doors; add weather-resistant caulk or weather-stripping tape around windows where there are holes, cracks and open seams.
- Window Insulation
  - Place window insulation film on your windows; this can increase your home's energy efficiency by 70%.
- Air Conditioning Unit
  - Drain any pipes and hoses coming from your air conditioner and cover the unit.
- Fiberglass Insulation
  - Add fiberglass insulation in your attic, around basement doors, windows in unused rooms and window AC units.
- Wrap your Pipes
  - Insulating pipes reduces heat loss, raises hot water temperatures and prevents pipes from freezing.
- Check Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Detectors
  - Perform monthly checks on your smoke and carbon monoxide detectors and change the batteries when needed.
- Lower the Thermostat
  - Lower your energy bill by setting your thermostat to 68 degrees and dress in layers of warm clothing for comfort.

- Add a Chimney Balloon
  - A chimney balloon can save you up to 30% on utility bills. The balloon reduces the downdraft and keeps rodents and insects out.
- Trim Trees
  - Trim any nearby trees to prevent ice and snow build-up that could damage property.
- Clean your Gutters
  - Clogged gutters can lead to the formation of water and ice that can seep into your house. Clean out gutters so water can drain freely.
- Prepare an Emergency Kit
  - Build your emergency kit that will sustain you and your family for at least 3 days/72 hours. [Build a Kit](#)

### **Winterize Your Car**

- Battery and Charging System, Cables, Terminals, Drive Belts and Engine Hoses
  - Have a certified technician check these items to prevent the risk of breaking down.
- Tire Type and Tread
  - All-season tires work best in light to moderate snow conditions; however, snow tires on all four wheels are the best for winter traction.
  - Tires should have 3/32 inches of tread; anything less should be replaced.
- Tire Pressure
  - Check tire pressure frequently during winter months. As the temperature drops, so will the pressures in the tires so refill as needed.
- Air Filter
  - Check the engine's air filter. If you can see through much of the filter, it's still clean. If not, it's blocked, and needs replaced.
- Coolant levels
  - Ask your technician what antifreeze should be used for your vehicle and the appropriate coolant to water ratio to prevent against corrosion and potential freezing.
- Lights
  - Check the operation of all headlights, taillights, emergency flashers, turn signals, brake lights and backup lights. Replace any burnt out bulbs.
- Wiper Blades
  - Replace blades that leave streaks or miss spots. Consider installing winter wipers to prevent ice and snow buildup on the windshield.
- Washer Fluid
  - Fill the windshield washer reservoir with a cleaning solution that has antifreeze components for cold weather use.
- Brakes

- Have your brakes inspected by a certified technician to ensure all components are in good working order.
- Transmission, Brake and Power Steering Fluids
  - Check all fluids to ensure they are at or above the minimum safe levels.

### **Winter Driving Survival Kit**

- Flashlight with fresh batteries
- Blankets
- Booster Cables
- Ice scraper
- Small bag of abrasive material, such as sand or cat litter
- Cloth or a roll of paper towels
- Small shovel
- Cell phone
- Can of de-icer
- Warning device, such as flares or reflective triangle
- [Basic Emergency Kit Supplies](#)

### **Winter Driving Safety Tips**

- Leave earlier for your destination.
- Use main roads or arteries whenever possible.
- Use your knowledge of the area to your advantage.
- Expect traffic to travel at a slower pace.

### **Additional Safety Tips**

Stay informed about emergency alerts and important information by signing up for [PWC Alerts](#), and keeping a NOAA weather radio handy for updates. For information about Prince William County government, go to the emergency information [portal](#).

For additional information on winterizing your home and car, visit [50 Ways to Winterize Your Home](#); [Winter Driving Tips – Driving in Ice & Snow](#), and [11 Ways to Winterize Your Car for Winter Driving Safety](#).