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IEMA, National Weather Service Encourage Illinois Residents to Prepare for Winter Storms

Preparedness Kits for Home, Vehicle are Winter Necessities

SPRINGFIELD – On the heels of a crippling winter storm on the East Coast and just nine months after a blizzard and ice storm hammered most of Illinois, the Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA) and the National Weather Service (NWS) today encouraged Illinois residents to begin preparing for the cold, snow and ice that define winters in Illinois.

IEMA and NWS will highlight winter storm preparedness throughout November as part of the annual Winter Storm Preparedness campaign.

“Fortunately, we haven’t experienced winter weather yet this season, but the East Coast storm is a vivid reminder of what could be right around the corner,” said IEMA Director Jonathon Monken. “And with February’s blizzard still fresh in most people’s minds, we hope Illinois residents will follow our advice and begin preparing for winter storms now.”

To help people prepare for winter hazards, IEMA, NWS and the American Red Cross developed a *Winter Storm Preparedness Guide*, which contains information about winter weather terms and tips for staying safe at home, in the car and at work or school. This guide is available on the Ready Illinois website at www.Ready.Illinois.gov or by calling 217-785-9888.

Widespread power outages caused by heavy snow or ice can be particularly dangerous during the cold, winter months. That’s why IEMA and NWS recommend emergency preparedness kits for homes and vehicles. A home preparedness kit should be stocked with items to help residents stay safe for at least three days. The kits should include a battery powered-NOAA weather radio, a flashlight, extra batteries, non-perishable food, water, a first-aid kit, extra medications and special items needed for babies, disabled or elderly family members and family pets.

“At least one severe winter storm has affected Illinois every winter for the past 100 years.” said Chris Miller, Warning Coordination Meteorologist with NWS in Lincoln. “That’s why it’s so important to take time now to prepare your family, your home and your automobiles in advance

of winter weather. Prior to an anticipated storm, heed the warnings and use the time to gather any supplies you will need for a few days, or make adjustments to any travel plans you may have.”

During the February blizzard, thousands of motorists were stranded by up to two feet of snow that fell in some areas of the state. A vehicle emergency preparedness kit can help keep travelers safe until help arrives. A car or truck kit should include a cell phone and charger, flashlight, extra batteries, first-aid kit, snack foods and water, blankets, extra clothing, gloves and hats, sand or kitty litter, shovel, windshield scraper and a tool kit.

In addition to stocking a vehicle preparedness kit, motorists should also take special precautions when traveling during the winter months. Always check the latest weather conditions along your travel route before leaving on a trip. Travel during daylight hours on main roads and provide your itinerary to a friend, relative or co-worker.

If you become stranded, pull as far off the road as possible, set your hazard lights to flashing and hang or tie a colored cloth (preferable red) to your antenna, window or door. Stay in your vehicle where rescuers are most likely to find you. Make sure the exhaust pipe is not blocked by snow, and then run the engine and heater about 10 minutes each hour to keep warm. Open a window slightly for ventilation when the engine is running, and periodically clear away snow from the exhaust pipe.

For more information about emergency preparedness, visit the Ready Illinois website at www.Ready.Illinois.gov.