

Winter Storm Safety Messaging Toolkit for Voluntary, Faith-Based, and Non-Governmental Organizations

Extreme winter weather can pose risks to your congregants and community members. Many safety hazards can be prevented through early communication and clear guidance on appropriate preparation measures.

Voluntary and Faith-Based Organizations as Key Messengers

As leaders in your communities, you are uniquely positioned to provide guidance and compassionate messaging. By proactively sharing winter storm safety alerts and resources, you can provide timely, reliable information and encourage swift action.

How to Use this Document

This toolkit provides ready-to-use, customizable messaging that voluntary and faith-based organizations can adapt and share during and after winter storms. Share this resource with other religious and community leaders, as well as those you serve. Each section identifies messaging and precautions that may be relevant to your location. Tailor messages to fit your community's unique needs and ensure outreach is regular and consistent.

Sample Messaging

Use these customizable messages across your official social media accounts, community websites, newsletters, emails, and any other communication channels you use. We encourage the use of graphics and visuals to increase audience engagement. Feel free to add links to your resources, websites, and contact information.

General Winter Weather Safety Messaging

- Sign up for [alerts and warnings](#) from state and local public safety officials. These notifications are especially important during winter storms, as forecasts can change quickly and storm impacts may evolve.
- Download the [FEMA App](#) to receive real-time weather and emergency alerts nationwide, notify loved ones, locate emergency shelters, and access safety tips.
- Visit [ready.gov/winter-ready](https://www.ready.gov/winter-ready) to learn about common hazards you might face. This site offers resources for low-cost heating solutions, winter-proofing your home and safe winter travel.
- Severe winter storms may cause extended power outages. Heat your home safely: if you use a generator, keep it outdoors and at least 20 feet away from windows, doors, and garages. Never use a gas stove or oven to heat your home. Check with local officials about open warming centers nearby.
- Be a good neighbor—let's support each other however we can! Check on your neighbors: they maybe be cold or hungry and you may be able to help. Volunteer to shovel snow for older adults and people with disabilities.
- People who live alone may need extra help weathering the storm. Share resources and provide some company.

Winter Safety Graphics

- Share [Winter Safety Graphics](#) via social media and traditional media to help spread important information.

Power Outages

- Snow, freezing rain, and ice can make travel dangerous and increase the risk of prolonged power outages. If you lose power during a winter storm, stay warm safely.
- If you can't keep your home warm, go to a community warming center. Call 211 to help locate one.
- If you need a place to get warm, you can visit [insert location] from [insert times and dates].

Road Safety

- **During a winter storm, follow guidance from local officials.** If they advise you to stay off the roads, please do so.
- **Check your local weather and traffic reports before heading out and keep emergency supplies in your car.** Tell someone your route and expected arrival time. Pack an emergency kit with blankets, food, water, first aid supplies and [other essentials](#) in case you become stranded.
- **Drive Slowly.** It takes longer to stop on slippery roads: increase your following distance and watch for icy conditions. Keep your auto insurance and towing company contact information easily accessible.
- **Stay in your vehicle.** If you become trapped, remain in your vehicle unless you see a building for shelter.

Outside Safety

- **Stay home if you can.** Remain indoors during and after a winter storm. If you must go out, be [ready for the cold](#).
- **Watch out for freezing rain.** If you must go outside, wear sturdy shoes with good traction. To maintain balance, take slow, short steps and keep your center of gravity over your feet.
- **Dress appropriately.** Wear layers and cover as much skin as possible. Protect your ears, face, hands and feet. Boots should be waterproof and insulated. Wearing a hat will help keep your whole-body warmer.
- **Watch for signs of frostbite and hypothermia.** This can include numbness, grayish-yellow or waxy skin, shivering, confusion, fumbling hands, slurred speech or drowsiness. Know [how to treat these conditions](#).

Communities in Action

- Faith-based and community-based organizations are vital resources, offering help, comfort and compassion to keep people safe and supported during winter storms. By sharing important safety messaging with your congregants and community, you strengthen community resilience and help build a safer, more prepared nation.

Partnering with FEMA

- FEMA Voluntary Agency Liaisons are actively partnering with state, local, and tribal governments to leverage voluntary, faith-based, and non-governmental organizations' capabilities to address gaps and emerging needs.
- Notify your state and local governments if you have any unmet needs that require additional resource support.

Contact Us

If you have any questions, please contact:

- FEMA Office of External Affairs – Intergovernmental Affairs at (202) 646-3444 or at FEMA-IGA@fema.dhs.gov
- FEMA Individual Assistance – Voluntary Agency Liaisons at FEMA-VAL@fema.dhs.gov