



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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We All Must Prepare for the Next Big Storm

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It has been one year since a Christmas blizzard took the lives of forty-six people in Erie County and left thousands of Western New Yorkers stuck in their homes for days. As devastating as last December's storm was, it was not the first time our region has been impacted by snow and we all know it will not be the last. Preparing for natural and manmade disasters is key to surviving them and New York State's Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services has advice on how to keep you and your family safe.

The first tip is to develop a plan that includes your entire family. Make sure you have contact information for family members, both local and out of town, and consider any special medical needs, including infants and elderly individuals. Your plan should also consider checking on neighbors, if possible.

Experts also recommend an emergency supply of food, water, and medications. In addition to bottled water and ready-to-eat canned foods, at least one week's supply of prescription medication should be kept on hand.

The Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services also suggests keeping various household supplies and tools handy, including flashlights and lanterns, a battery-powered radio, and a supply of fresh batteries. You should also keep gasoline to operate a generator, propane for a grill or camp stove and charcoal for a barbecue grill. Obviously, these items should only be used outdoors.

Have your furnace checked once a year to ensure it is operating properly and make sure you know where the outside exhaust vent is in case you must clear the snow away. If you must rely on an alternative heat source in your home such as a fireplace, wood stove or kerosene heater, make sure they are properly ventilated. Also use caution operating gas stoves and keep a fire extinguisher nearby.

It is also suggested to keep emergency supplies in your vehicle, including blankets, extra winter clothes, a flashlight, matches and candles, a shovel, battery cables and quick energy food items. If you become stranded, stay with your vehicle unless assistance is visible within one hundred feet. Occasionally run the engine to keep warm, keep the exhaust pipe clear of snow and open your window a crack to allow for fresh air.

Staying up to date is also important. Pay attention to local news and weather reports and take steps to prepare for the worst. If severe weather is predicted, make sure cell phones are fully charged and consider cancelling any travel plans, if possible.

If you would like to learn more, the state offers online and in-person training through the Citizen Preparedness Corps website: <https://www.dhSES.ny.gov/citizen-preparedness-corps>

As we bid farewell to 2023, I wish you and yours a happy, healthy, and safe New Year.