



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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Gearing Up for Old Man Winter

Senator Patty Ritchie

November 29, 2018

ISSUE:

- [Winter Safety](#)



Senator Ritchie's Weekly Column

It is that time of year again. Snow has already arrived in most of Central and Northern New York and for many of us, the snow will be begin to be counted in feet. Now is the time to prepare your home, and your vehicle, for what the Old Farmer's Almanac is predicting will be a cold and snowy winter.

Below are some of my favorite tips for ensuring you are ready for whatever Mother Nature throws at us:

Preparing your home:

- Stock up on non-perishable food, water, warm clothes and fuel that will last you for at least 72 hours;
- Make certain any chimneys have been properly cleaned and wood stoves are all in perfect working condition. Have a professional perform a check up on your furnace and air vents;
- If you use space heaters, make sure they are properly cleaned, away from anything that could be heat sensitive and always turn them off when you leave a room;
- After a major snowfall, clear your porches, decks, sidewalks, roof and driveway cleared of snow to prevent ice and snow build up;
- If you are struggling with home heating bills, the Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) can help. Visit www.myBenefits.ny.gov or obtain an application at your local Department of Social Services office to apply.

Preparing your vehicle:

- Check your tires and make sure they have good treads and adequate pressure;

- Make sure your vehicle's fluids are filled—paying special attention to your windshield wiper fluid;
- Pack an emergency kit that remains in your vehicle at all times and contains items such as a shovel, ice scraper, blanket, cell phone charger, flashlight, water, snacks and other necessities;
- Give yourself extra time to get to your destination—and remember, phone calls and text messages can wait until your vehicle is in park.

Winter can be long and in some cases dangerous. However, by following the above tips, you can protect yourself and your loved ones from harm as wintry weather continues.