

Winter 2008-2009: Generic Press Release

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DIRECTOR OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT URGES RESIDENTS TO PREPARE FOR WINTER

Orleans County—The Orleans County Legislature proclaimed October 26 through November 1, 2008 as Winter Weather Awareness Week in Orleans County and urged residents to begin preparing for the upcoming season.

“The calendar may say winter begins on December 21, but any New Yorker will tell you it comes much earlier. That’s why it makes sense to prepare for the winter season and possible weather hazards that come with it today,” said Paul Wagner, Director of Emergency Management. “There are some simple, common-sense steps to take now to prepare your family and your property for the winter months ahead.”

The first steps residents can take is to review their family emergency plan, review what supplies they should have stored to be prepared for any emergency and be aware of local weather conditions by listening to broadcasts of NOAA Weather Radio, the National Weather Service, and local television and radio stations. “Before going out on the road, residents should listen to the local media reports or call law enforcement agencies for the latest road conditions,” he said.

One of the best ways to get emergency information is through NY-ALERT, the State’s all-hazards, web-based alert and notification system. It’s free. To subscribe, visit www.nyalert.gov. If you do not own or have access to a computer, call toll-free 1-888-697-6972.

With the spike in home heating fuel prices this year, residents are urged to use caution and read all directions when using alternate heating sources such as kerosene heaters, wood and pellet stoves, and fireplaces. Have proper ventilation. And, in the event of a power outage, generators should only be operated outdoors.

“Have a professional check out your furnace, woodstove and chimney. Make certain they are in good working condition. And don’t forget to replace the batteries in your smoke, heat and carbon monoxide detectors,” said Director Wagner. “It is also a good idea to make certain your snow blower is ready to go to work.”

Once the home front is prepared, the Emergency Management Director suggested that the focus be turned to the family vehicle. “Have a mechanic check your battery, anti-freeze, wipers and thermostat,” he said. “Make sure your tires will deliver the traction you’ll need in the snow. And you will also want to make sure you have emergency supplies aboard such as a shovel, flashlight and extra batteries, tire chains and booster cables.

“Most importantly, motorists should drive with extreme care during the winter,” said Legislative Chairman, Henry Smith, Jr. “When severe weather is forecast, stay at home unless you absolutely have to drive. If you must go out, plan your stops, clean the vehicle completely of snow and ice, and always match your speed to road conditions.”

Director Wagner said a primary concern during the winter months is the potential loss of heat, power, telephone service and a resulting shortage of supplies if storm conditions continue for more than a day.

The following is a list of items all residents and businesses should have available:

- Flashlight and extra batteries.
- Battery-powered portable radio or NOAA Weather Radio to receive emergency information. Have extra batteries. The radio will allow you to listen to weather forecasts, information, and other emergency broadcasts by local authorities.
- Three days’ supply of food. High-energy food, such as dried fruit or candy, and food requiring no cooking or refrigeration is best. Also stock an emergency supply of bottled water one gallon per person per day.
- A one-week supply of essential medicines and baby items.
- First aid kit and supplies.
- Extra blankets and sleeping bags.
- Fire extinguisher and smoke detector. Test units regularly to ensure they are working properly.

The Director of Emergency Management also said that “winter is especially challenging for the elderly and physically handicapped. Take the time to check in on your neighbor and lend them a helping hand.”

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