



# WINTER STORMS

# Be prepared for winter storms

Winter storms in South Africa can bring heavy rainfall, snow, strong winds and low temperatures to various parts of the country. These storms typically occur between May and August, with the Western Cape and Eastern Cape provinces being the most affected.

The impact of winter storms can be severe, causing flooding, landslides, power outages, transportation disruptions, higher risk of car accidents, hypothermia, frostbite and carbon monoxide poisoning. In addition, snowfall in the mountainous regions can lead to road closures and damage to crops and livestock.

To prepare for winter storms, South African authorities regularly issue weather warnings and advisories, urging people to take necessary precautions and stay indoors during severe weather. This includes stocking up on essential supplies, securing loose objects outside, and avoiding travel in affected areas.

Despite the challenges posed by winter storms, they also bring benefits such as replenishing water reservoirs and promoting the growth of crops. Overall, South Africans have learned to adapt to these annual weather events and take steps to minimise their impact on daily life.



## **Prepare NOW**

**Know your area's risk for winter storms.** Extreme winter weather can leave communities without utilities or other services for long periods of time.

**Stay informed.** Keep up to date with weather forecasts and warnings from the South African Weather Service and follow advice from local authorities.

**Prepare your home to keep out the cold with insulation, caulking and weather stripping.**

Learn how to keep pipes from freezing. Install and test smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors with battery backups. Consider investing in a generator or an alternative heating source such as a gas heater or fireplace.

**Gather supplies in case you need to stay home for several days without power.** Be mindful of each person's specific needs, including medication. Don't forget the needs of pets. Have extra batteries for radios and flashlights.

**Create an emergency supply kit for your car.** Include jumper cables, sand, a flashlight, warm clothes, blankets, bottled water and non-perishable snacks. Keep the fuel tank full.

**Prepare your car.** If you live in an area where it snows and you need to drive during a winter storm, make sure your car is equipped with snow tyres or chains and keep an emergency kit in your car, including warm clothing, blankets, food and water.

**Learn what to do in a flooding situation.**

**Learn the signs of and basic treatments for frostbite and hypothermia.**

## **Survive DURING**

**Stay informed.** Stay tuned to local weather reports and updates from reliable sources to stay up to date on the storm's progress and any warnings or advisories issued.

**Prepare your home.** Make sure your home is ready for the storm by securing loose items outside, trimming trees and clearing gutters. Have plenty of blankets, food and water stored in case you lose power or become stranded.

**Stay indoors.** If possible, stay inside during the storm to avoid being exposed to strong winds, rain or snow. If you must go outside, dress in warm, waterproof clothing and wear sturdy shoes.

**Avoid driving.** Avoid driving during a winter storm if possible. If you must drive, make sure your car is equipped with good tyres and drive slowly and cautiously. Keep an emergency kit in your car, including a blanket, food, water and a flashlight.

**Check on others.** If you have elderly or vulnerable neighbours, check on them to ensure they are safe and have everything they need. Older adults and young children are more at risk in extreme cold.

**Be prepared for power outages.** Winter storms can cause power outages, so make sure you have a plan in place in case you lose power. Have flashlights, a battery-powered radio and a supply of batteries.

**Stay warm.** During a winter storm, it's important to stay warm to prevent hypothermia. Wear warm clothing, use blankets and avoid exposing yourself to the elements for extended periods.

**Stay off roads if at all possible.** If trapped in your car, stay inside.

**Limit your time outside.** If you need to go outside, wear layers of warm clothing. Watch for signs of frostbite and hypothermia.

**Avoid carbon monoxide poisoning.** Only use generators and grills outdoors and away from windows. Never heat your home with a gas stovetop or oven.

**Watch for signs of frostbite and hypothermia and begin treatment right away.**

## **Be safe AFTER**

**Check for any damages.** Inspect your property for any damage caused by the storm. This includes checking your roof, windows, doors and siding for signs of damage.

**Clear snow and ice.** Clear any snow and ice from your walkways, driveways and pavements. This will prevent slips and falls.

**Check for power outages.** If you lost power during the storm, check with your local municipality or Eskom for updates and when the power will be restored.

**Check on your neighbours.** Make sure your neighbours are safe and have everything they need.

**Prepare for the next storm.** Be prepared for the possibility of another winter storm by stocking up on supplies such as food, water and blankets. Also make sure your car has a full tank of fuel and emergency supplies in case you need to travel during a storm.

**Stay informed.** Monitor the news and weather updates to stay informed about any future storms or weather-related hazards in your area.

## **Recognise and RESPOND**

**Hypothermia** is an unusually low body temperature. A temperature below 35 °C is an emergency.

**Signs:** Shivering, exhaustion, confusion, fumbling hands, memory loss, slurred speech and drowsiness.

**What to do:** Go to a warm room. Warm the centre of the body first – chest, groin, neck and head. Keep dry and wrapped up in warm blankets, including the head and neck.

