President’s Message

Unless you live in a subtropical climate, your home could face the damaging effects of winter weather. Freezing temperatures are the norm in many states and often reach as far south as Central Florida. For that reason, we urge all homeowners to inspect their homes and “winterize” them before the cold days that lie ahead. We’ve dedicated this issue of NewsFLASH to Cold Weather Safety to provide you the simple steps to a “winterized” home. We also look at power outages, and ways to avoid the dangers. As always, we are interested in your comments and suggestions, so please e-mail us, flash@flash.org, or call, 1-877-221-SAFE (7233).

Sincerely,
Leslie Chapman-Henderson
President / CEO

FLASH Point of View

Keep the Chill Out and Safely Enjoy the Season

By Nancy Baily, First Floridian President / CEO

Winter weather can present unexpected risks to your home. Whether insulating pipes to prevent freezing or checking and cleaning your heating system, there are things you should know about winterizing your home. Please take a moment to review this helpful winter home maintenance checklist so you can protect your investment.

- Check your outlets and all electrical holiday decorations for potential fire hazards such as frayed wires or loose connections. Do not overload the outlet, extension cords or surge protectors.
- Check and clean your heating system to make sure it is in good working condition for the winter months. This is generally a job best performed by a professional.
- Have adequate fuel reserves on hand since fuel carriers might not be able to refuel for several days during severe weather.
- Close off and lower the temperature in unneeded rooms. Make sure that there is sufficient heat to prevent the freezing of water pipes.
- Insulate pipes that pass through unheated areas. Your home’s crawl space and attic are two such areas.
- Clean and/or replace your furnace filter before the heating season begins.

Continued...
Keep the Chill Out and Safely Enjoy the Season

- Clean the clothes dryer exhaust duct and space under the dryer. This prevents lint from accumulating and decreases the risk of fire.
- Service snow removal equipment and have rock salt on hand to melt ice on walkways.
- Set the heat in your home no lower than 55 degrees.
- Remove screens from windows and install storm windows.
- Protect your roof against heavy snow and ice loads. Keep gutters clean and roof drains opened.
- Inspect washing machine hoses periodically and replace hoses that show signs of leaking.

We hope you have a safe and happy holiday season. Take time now to thoroughly inspect your home, using this checklist, and reduce your chances for home fire or other costly damage through the winter months. For more information on home safety, visit Traveler's Personal Claim section at wcm.travelers.com/claim_services/pl/ or go to www.flash.org.

FLASH Tips

Use Safe Heating Sources

Since winter storms can cause power outages, have an adequate, reliable and safe heating source inside the home. If your home does not have a fireplace, or you choose to use alternate heat sources, practice safety. Space heaters should be carefully inspected and used only as recommended by the manufacturer. Keep all combustible materials away and place space heaters at least three feet from furniture, walls, curtains or other flammable surfaces. Also, be sure to turn off space heaters when you leave home or go to bed. Left unattended, these devices increase the risk of fire and serious damage to your home. Never burn charcoal or other carbon monoxide producing fuels in the home.

Install and Inspect Smoke Alarms

Every level of your home, including basements, should have a working smoke alarm. Be sure to install alarms in all sleeping areas, especially in rooms where the door is kept shut at night. Smoke alarms should be tested once a month and batteries replaced every six months. Also, be sure to replace alarms that are more than 10 years old.

Safety Tips for Carbon Monoxide

- Install UL approved carbon monoxide detectors.
- Have appliances using combustible fuels installed by a professional and checked annually for proper ventilation.
- Never run your car in the garage with the garage door closed.
- Never use a gas range to heat your home.
- Never burn charcoal in an unventilated area.
- Never adjust your own pilot light.
- Inspect chimneys and flues for proper ventilation.
- Never use non-vented combustion heaters indoors.
- Avoid smoking indoors.
Power Outages - A Potential Disaster

Power outages can be more than a minor inconvenience. As 50 million U.S. and Canadian citizens realized in August 2003, power outages hold the potential to disrupt the halls of commerce as well as the single family home. What many are calling the "worst blackout in the nation's history, costing at least $6 billion in economic and other losses," made clear that power outages of any kind are potentially costly disasters. Whether caused by grid failure or inclement weather, the next power outage doesn't have to be a disaster for your family. Here are some tips to keep your home and family safe when the lights go dark.

- Include power outages in your family disaster plan, identifying alternate means of transportation and routes to home, school or office.
- Keep a supply of non-perishable foods and at least one gallon of water on hand.
- Have one or more coolers for cold food storage in case power outage is prolonged. Perishable foods should not be stored for more than two hours above 40 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Have an emergency power supply for anyone dependent on medical equipment requiring electricity.
- Stock plenty of fresh batteries for flashlights and radios.
- Turn off any electrical equipment that was in use prior to the power outage.
- Connect only individual appliances to portable generators and never plug a generator into wall outlets.
- Use gas-powered generators only in well-ventilated areas.
- Do not use candles.
- Throw out perishable food items whose internal temperature is greater than 40 degrees.
- Check on neighbors, friends and relatives who may need assistance if weather is severe during the outage.

Practice Generator Safety

Generators can be used as an emergency power supply in the event of an outage. Be sure the generator is properly tested and approved. Look for a label showing UL or FM listing, and always operate according to the manufacturer's instructions. Do not, under any circumstance, connect a generator to your home's electrical system.

When refueling, be sure to let the generator cool first, then use only the fuel recommended by the manufacturer. Proper storage and handling of fuel is also important to ensure your family's safety. It is essential to use your generator only in well-ventilated areas.

Portable generators can supply adequate emergency power for lighting, vital medical equipment, refrigerators, sump pumps and essential appliances with proper installation and operation. When using a generator, always follow the manufacturer's instructions to avoid serious injury to people and property.

What Causes Power Outages?

- 70% Weather-related
- 11% Animals Contacting Wires
- 11% Unknown
- 4% Auto Accidents
- 4% Utility Maintenance
- 1% Human Error

Source: Edison Electric Institute, 1998
Free "How-To Clinics" designed for children ages 6-12 are held the first Saturday of each month at all Home Depot stores. Children accompanied by an adult can work together on more than 50 projects from wooden birdhouses; step stools and sailboats to more educational projects like the plastic bag recycle box and window bird box. These free workshops teach children do-it-yourself skills and tool safety, while at the same time helping to instill a sense of accomplishment. Visit www.homedepot.com or call your local store for more details.

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**Upcoming Events**

- **InspectionWorld ASHI Conference**
  Albuquerque, NM
  January 14-17, 2004
  [www.inspectionworld.org](http://www.inspectionworld.org/)

- **Florida Community Emergency Response Teams Conference**
  Weeki-Wachi, FL
  January 16-18, 2004
  [www.floridacert.com](http://www.floridacert.com)

- **Fire-Rescue East 2004**
  Jacksonville, FL
  January 22-24, 2004
  [www.ffca.org/fre_index.htm](http://www.ffca.org/fre_index.htm)

- **Florida Emergency Preparedness Association 2004 Conference**
  Orlando, FL
  January 25-30, 2004
  [www.fepa.org/meet_conference04.html](http://www.fepa.org/meet_conference04.html)

- **National Emergency Management Association**
  Washington, DC
  February 9-14, 2004
  [www.nemaweb.org](http://www.nemaweb.org)

- **National Roofing Contractors Association 117th Annual Convention**
  San Diego, CA
  February 22-25, 2004

- **2004 Emergency Management Training Conference**
  Waco, TX
  March 7 - 10, 2004

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**FLASH Links:**

- [www.statefarm.com/lifevents/winter.htm](http://www.statefarm.com/lifevents/winter.htm)
  For more information on winterizing your home, see State Farm's Winter Tips.

  Mitigation Success Stories from FEMA.gov

- [www.naic.org/insprod/](http://www.naic.org/insprod/)
  Insurance Products & Services from the National Association of Insurance Commissioners

- [www.ashi.org/find/](http://www.ashi.org/find/)
  Visit the American Society of Home Inspectors to find a certified inspector in your area.

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**Quote**

"Without having experienced the cold of winter, one cannot appreciate the warmth of spring."

- Chinese Proverb
  [Bartleby.com](http://www.bartleby.com)