Don’t let a winter wonderland turn into a weather nightmare

Winter weather can range from a moderate snowfall during the course of a few hours to a blizzard with blinding, wind-driven snow that lasts for several days. Heavy snowfall and extreme cold can immobilize an entire region by discontinuing heat, power and communications services to homes and businesses for days at a time.

1. Have a plan
   - Establish a communication plan in the event family members are separated during a winter storm event. Take the following into consideration when creating a plan:
     - How will emergency alerts and warnings be received by family members?
     - How will family members stay in contact if phone lines are down?
     - How will family members let others know that they have reached safety?
     - Establish a meeting place and determine how household members will get there?
     - Be able to safely shut off or access utilities especially if you will be out of your home for an extended period of time.

2. Be sure your plan includes the needs of all family members
   - Children - Keeping kids healthy and calm is important especially during a weather emergency. Let kids help pack a “fun bag” that includes games and toys in advance to include with other necessities.
   - Elderly and members with access and functional needs - Be able to quickly locate necessary medicine and supplies and be able to arrange special transportation if necessary.
   - Pets – Keep ID tags current with emergency contact information and consider having your pet microchipped.
   - Remember important records and electronics – Include important documents and other personal records in case you are unable to return to your home. Store these in a watertight bag in a safe spot that is ready to grab in the event of an emergency.

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3. Build an emergency safety kit

Consider including the following basic supplies in your kit:

- One gallon of water per person per day for at least three days, for drinking and sanitation.
- At least a three-day supply of non-perishable food.
- Battery-powered or hand crank radio and extra batteries.
- Flashlight and extra batteries.
- First aid kit.
- Whistle to signal for help.
- Moist towelettes, garbage bags.
- Wrench/pliers to turn off utilities.
- Manual can opener.
- Local maps.
- Cellphone and charger.

4. Seek shelter and stay informed

- Check emergency management agencies on plans for shelter and evacuation.
- Use a weather radio, cellphone apps or TV weather updates to track winter storm progress.
- Sign up to receive emergency alerts on your phone or by email.

Visit any of these sites for more useful information on how to prepare your family for any weather emergency:

- www.ready.gov/
- www.redcross.org/prepare/
- www.fema.gov/before-winter-storms-extreme-cold

Safety tidbit:

Know what public warnings for winter weather mean

- Winter storm watch: Be alert, a storm is likely.
- Winter weather advisory: Conditions are expected to cause significant inconveniences and may be hazardous, especially to motorists.
- Frost/freeze warning: Below freezing temperatures are expected and may cause damage to plants, crops or fruit trees.
- Winter storm warning: Take action, the storm is in or entering the area.
- Blizzard warning: Snow and strong winds combined will produce blinding snow, near zero visibility, deep drifts and life-threatening wind chill. Seek refuge immediately.

For more information, contact Safe Kids at 859-323-1153 or visit www.safekidsfayettecounty.com.