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News Release NEWS RELEASE

Severe weather calls for drivers and homeowners to be prepared

Omaha, NE, January 12, 2017 – With the possibility of severe ice and snow moving into Eastern Nebraska, the American Red Cross is stressing winter driving and home safety. Now would be a good time to make sure you are ready should conditions deteriorate.

“People should stay off the roads if at all possible,” says Jill Orton, Regional Chief Executive Officer for Red Cross. “Residents in our area should also make sure they are prepared at home for power outages that often result from heavy icing conditions.”

If you have to drive in freezing rain or snow, the Red Cross offers 10 tips for motorists:

- Keep your vehicle’s gas tank at least half full at all times and clean lights and windows to help you see, especially at night.
- Let friends and family members know where you are going and when you expect to arrive at your destination.
- Make sure you have extra clothing, coats, and blankets.
- Carry nutritious snacks and water if heading out on a trip
- Make sure everyone in the vehicle is wearing a seat belt.
- Don’t follow other vehicles too closely. Sudden stops are difficult on snowy or icy roadways.
- Do not pass snow plows
- Do not use cruise control when driving on ice or snow
- If you do run off the road, stay with your vehicle. If you have to get out of your vehicle, use the side away from traffic.
- Do not run your engine and heater constantly, but run for about 10 minutes every hour.

In a severe storm the Red Cross recommends that residents shelter in place until conditions are safe to leave their homes. Should a power outage occur, make sure that your family and home get through the storm safely:

- Never use a gas stove or oven to heat your home. If you are using a fireplace, use a glass or metal fire screen large enough to catch sparks and rolling logs. Make sure fireplace embers are out before leaving the room or going to bed.
- Use flashlights for light, not candles
- Keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible. Your refrigerator will keep food cold for about 4 hours. If the freezer is full, it will keep its temperature for about 48 hours.
- Turn off and unplug all unnecessary electrical equipment and any appliances, equipment or electronics to avoid damaging them when the power is restored.
- Use generators correctly – never operate a generator inside the home, including the basement or garage.
- Portable generators should not be hooked to the home’s wiring. The safest thing to do is to connect the equipment you want to power directly to the outlets on the generator.
- Don’t forget your pets – bring them indoors. If they can’t come inside, make sure they have enough shelter to keep them warm and that they can get to unfrozen water.

Should the need arise for shelter locations, the Red Cross will advise through local and social media.

WEATHER ALERTS AND FIRST AID TIPS -- People can also download the Red Cross Emergency App for instant access to winter storm tips and weather alerts for their area and where loved-ones live. Expert medical guidance and a hospital locator are included in the First Aid App in case travelers encounter any mishaps. Both apps are available to download for free in app stores or at [redcross.org/apps](https://www.redcross.org/apps).

About the American Red Cross:

The American Red Cross shelters, feeds and provides emotional support to victims of disasters; supplies about 40 percent of the nation's blood; teaches skills that save lives; provides international humanitarian aid; and supports military members and their families. The Red Cross is a not-for-profit organization that depends on volunteers and the generosity of the American public to perform its mission. For more information, please visit [redcross.org](https://www.redcross.org) or [cruzrojaamericana.org](https://www.cruzrojaamericana.org), or visit us on Twitter at [@RedCross](https://twitter.com/RedCross).

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