



Be Prepared for Winter Months



The Home – Be Prepared

- **Emergency Kit:** Have a small supply of non-perishable, easy-to-prepare foods, supply of drinking water, flashlight with extra batteries, First Aid Kit, Phone Charger.
Keep extra supplies of essential medication in case it is difficult to get to the pharmacy
- Have an adequate supply of fuel for heating/cooking and if possible a suitable alternative should the main supply fail
- **Home Heating Oil:** Ensure there is an adequate level of oil in the tank to cover the winter months to heat the home. During cold spells, open the attic hatch to ensure the pipes in the attic do not freeze.
- **Salt & Sand:** Have a shovel and bag of salt to keep paths clear and safe. Also have some sand available for traction; therefore going from the home to the car will be safer.
- Have candles and matches. Candles should always be placed away from draughts in proper candleholders. Never leave a burning candle unattended
- Have emergency contact numbers to hand (Health & Safety Folder)
- Check that loft insulation is thick and in good condition
- Fit your water tank with an insulation jacket or alternatively, wrap the top and sides with suitable insulation material
- Repair any leaks at taps or valves
- Know how to turn off the water supply (usually under the kitchen sink) or to the front of property.
- Fit draught excluders to your doors and windows
- Make sure heating equipment is well-maintained, vented correctly and working properly
- Ensure chimneys are cleaned at least once a year

Health Advice - Keeping Well and Warm

- Staff and individuals, especially older or more vulnerable people, should remember to take extra care during a cold spell. People should not venture outdoors in severe weather if possible. Staff is requested to make contact with their Team Leader to update them on their safety.
- Remember:- Keep warm, eat well and avoid unnecessary travel.

Medical Appointments

- If travel services or roads are disrupted due to bad weather, you may need to change planned visits to the hospital or other health centres for appointments or even a planned operation. If severe disruption occurs, some health services may have to change their operating times. If you have a question about any planned appointments, please phone the hospital or facility that you are due to attend to check on any changes to services.

Health Advice - Drinking Water

- If your water supply is disrupted due to severe weather, you will find health advice on drinking water supplies on the website www.hse.ie/drinking water

Preventing Falls and Trips

- Emergency Departments around the country can be busy in severe weather, dealing with sprains and fractures as a result of slips and falls on icy roads and footpaths. While both young and old present to Emergency Departments as a result of falls on ice, as we get older a fall can result in broken bones, a loss of confidence, loss of mobility and fear of leaving the home. Many falls can be prevented and by making small changes we can reduce the chances of falling.
- Accidents do happen but many slips, trips and falls are preventable. A leaflet, 'Keep Safe This Winter – Preventing Falls and Trips', is available on the website www.hse.ie with lots of helpful tips on how to be safe in your home and outdoors this winter. You can also contact your Local Health Office for more advice.

Personal Safety – Staying Safe

- In icy weather, wear well-fitted shoes with non-slip soles if you have to go out but try to limit walking during the cold weather
- As you get older you may need to change the dose of your medicines – check with your doctor. Some medicines or combinations of medicines may make you feel faint or light-headed which could lead to a fall.
- Eat regular hot meals and drink plenty of fluids, this will keep you warm and will give you energy to keep active
- If you have a fall, even a minor one, make sure you visit your doctor for a check up

Fall prevention in your home

- Leave a low energy light on at night time, preferably one with a high light output
- Use a non-slip shower or bath mat
- Make sure wires or cords from lamps, telephones etc. do not trail where you walk
- Arrange furniture so that you can easily move around all your rooms
- Keep the floors clear from papers and books et, that could cause you to trip
- Remove rugs or use non-slip tape so rugs will not slip
- Keep well this winter – for more information visit www.hse.ie 4

Water Shortages/Leaks

- Information on your Local Authority's arrangements for dealing with water shortages can be located on the following website
- <http://www.environ.ie/en/Links/LocalAuthorities/>
- **Be Prepared – precautions against freezing temperatures**
- Mains water supply to premises, i.e. external stopcock - the depth from ground-level to the stopcock should not be less than 600mm. If required, seek professional advice on having the stopcock lowered or protected. The same applies to the line from the stopcock to your property. Be aware that the level may vary as it nears your property

- To prevent stopcocks freezing, open the stopcock chamber and remove any water. Fill the chamber with non-absorbent material to provide insulation. Do not use absorbent material as it too will freeze when wet
- **Do not leave taps running as this merely wastes a valuable resource**
- If you are leaving your property unattended for a period of more than a day or two, you should shut off the water supply to the property from the external stopcock (while ensuring that any water-dependent appliances or facilities are also shut-off)

NB: All properties should identify the external stopcock and make all staff are aware how to turn off supply.

Be Prepared - Avoid Frozen Pipes

- Ensure all exposed pipes are adequately insulated. This includes pipes in the attic where the attic floor has been well insulated
- Insulate or wrap a towel around an outside tap.
- Leave a light on in the attic
- Open attic trap door to allow heat in
- Leave heating on for longer periods at lower settings. Approximately 18 degrees on wall thermostats.
- Warmth offers the best protection against frozen pipes so keep your house warm

Frozen mains water supply

- If your supply is frozen, be cautious with use of heating systems, washing machines or other water-dependent appliances or facilities
- If in doubt, contact a qualified plumber for advice.

Water Leaks

- Water supply in vacant premises should be shut off and drained down in preparation for winter
- Keyholders - check premises regularly for possible leaks

If a leak is detected

- Turn off water supply –stop valve is usually under the kitchen sink and stopcock outside the property.
- Turn on cold taps to drain the system
- Turn off central heating
- Turn off electricity supply if leak is near electrical appliances
- Call a qualified plumber

Clearing Snow

Clearing snow from footpaths

- Clearing snow can be demanding work - only undertake the task if you are reasonably fit and do not have an underlying medical condition
- Clear snow or ice early in the day if possible
- Wear sturdy, insulated, waterproof footwear with good gripping soles
- Use a shovel. There are special shovels for this task but any garden shovel will do
- Make a path down the middle of the area being cleared so that you will have a clear surface to walk on
- Never use boiling water to clear snow (it may re-freeze and cause the formation of black ice)
- You can prevent ice forming by spreading salt on the area that you have cleared and then sand for grip
- When you are clearing snow it is important that you don't create an obstacle for pedestrians or traffic. Ensure that the snow is removed to a location that won't create a hazard

Legal Advice for Snow Clearance and Gritting

- The Office of the Attorney General has advised that liability does not arise when snow is cleared from footpaths in a safe manner.
- In relation to people gritting roads with grit supplied by the local authorities, the legal advice is that the issue of liability does not arise where the material is delivered, stored and used in a safe manner and does not cause hazard.

Flooding Advice

The primary natural sources of flooding in Ireland are rivers (fluvial flooding), the sea (coastal and tidal flooding), intense rainfall (pluvial flooding), and groundwater. If a flood threatens your area there are a number of steps you can take to minimise damage to your property but remember safety should always be your first concern. Some areas of Clare are classed a flood risk area and you should always have preparations in place in case a flood should happen. Preparing a plan for what you should do in the event of a flood is well worth the time it may take. It could save you a lot of money, inconvenience and stress and could even save your life.

Before the threat of a flood arises (advanced planning)

Preparation for flooding should begin before the threat of a flood event occurs. You should assess whether you live in a flood prone area. Speak to your local authority, or consult the flood hazard maps for your area. If you find that you are in a flood prone area, there are a number of steps that you can take to make your property more resilient to flooding. For example:

- Assess if your property is at risk from flooding (e.g. where could a flood enter your house, are bedrooms on ground floors or in basements, etc.)
- Prepare a flood plan for your household.
- Check with your home insurance company to see if you are covered for flood damage.
- Find out if there is a Flood Emergency Plan for your area.
- Consider if measures such as retrofitting to provide flood barriers, sealing basements, and purchasing floodgates are required.

Be prepared - Inside your house

- Move valuables and other items to safety. Place them above the flood level or upstairs
- Put sandbags at any openings where the water could gain access
- Turn off gas and electricity
- Be prepared to evacuate your home. Protect yourself, your family and others that need your help
- Have warm waterproof clothing and wellingtons ready
- Have sufficient medication to hand (if needed)
- Check water/food stocks

Co-operate with emergency services and local authorities. For your safety you may be evacuated to an emergency centre

Be prepared – Outside your house

- Move your car to high ground if possible
- Remember that floodwater could get into your garage so move any chemicals or fuel to ensure that they do not spill into the floodwater and cause an additional hazard
- Weigh down any manhole covers with sandbags or heavy objects. These could open during a flood and cause a hazard
- Close off the flow valves on propane tanks, oil drums, or other fuel containers that supply your home through pipes and fittings
- Unplug any exterior electrical connections such as outdoor lighting, pond pumps and filters

General Safety advice

- Don't try to walk or drive through floodwater
- If possible avoid contact with floodwater as it may be contaminated or polluted
- Take care if you have to walk through shallow water – manhole covers may have come off and there may be other underwater hazards that you cannot see
- Never try to swim through fast-flowing water – you may get swept away or struck by an object in the water

You will find detailed information and advice for dealing with all aspects of flooding from the website

Road Safety

Is Your Journey Absolutely Necessary?

In extreme weather conditions you should ask yourself if making a journey by road is absolutely necessary. You might consider delaying your trip until the weather and road conditions improve or use public transport where available. If your journey is unavoidable you should be prepared. Ensure your vehicle has a more than adequate supply of fuel for the journey. Allow extra time and drive with caution. Let your Team Leader know your route and when you expect to arrive. Check to see if there are any problems on your intended route before setting out on a journey. Listen to TV or radio bulletins and check the weather forecast. Remember that the best road conditions are likely to occur between 10am and 4pm. Here are the links to some useful websites:

www.transport.ie for updates from public transport providers

www.rsa.ie to find more information on road safety

www.met.ie to check the weather forecast

www.garda.ie for travel warnings

www.aaroadwatch.ie for latest traffic news

www.rsa.ie use this link to find your local radio station

Is Your Vehicle Winter-Ready?

- Check your vehicle's owner's manual and find out if it has any safety assist technology e.g. ABS
- Get your vehicle serviced to ensure it is fit and safe
- Carry out regular checks on the vehicle
- Check for wear and tear on wiper blades and replace them as soon as they start to smear rather than clean windows
- Keep tyre pressure at the manufacturer's recommended level
- Replace tyres if necessary - check your tyre tread depth - the minimum legal limit is 1.6mm, however, for winter driving 3mm is advised
- Make sure all vehicle lights are working and clean
- Ensure the vehicle has adequate levels of anti-freeze coolant and screen wash
- Check your vehicle battery

Be Prepared

- In prolonged icy or snowy driving conditions it is advisable to carry a fully charged mobile phone and have the following in the boot of the car
- High Visibility Vest
- Tow rope
- A shovel
- Appropriate footwear in case you have to leave your vehicle
- A hazard warning triangle
- De-icing equipment (Both for glass and door locks)
- First aid kit
- A fire extinguisher
- A torch
- A car blanket, additional clothing & some food and water (for long journeys)
- Consider carrying some salt or sand

Motoring Tips in Severe Flooding

- Slow down - do not drive at speed into floodwater – there may be a pothole or debris concealed in the water or your vehicle may aquaplane leading to loss of control
- Before you drive through floodwater ascertain how deep the water is to ensure your vehicle can get through safely
- In rain and when visibility is poor drivers should use dipped headlights
- Keep a sharp lookout for pedestrians, cyclists etc and avoid spraying or swamping them
- If you have to stop, activate your hazard warning lights

Motoring Tips in Fog

- Slow down and increase the distance from the vehicle in front
- Use dipped headlights and front and rear fog lights, if fitted
- Remember to switch off fog lights when visibility improves
- Keep a sharp lookout for pedestrians, cyclists and motorcyclists
- Do not blindly follow the vehicle in front – it may leave the road for whatever reason
- If you have to stop, activate your hazard warning lights

If staff and individuals need to walk,

If a journey cannot be avoided, be extremely careful as snow and ice can make walking on footpaths very dangerous

- Wear sturdy footwear - insulated and waterproof with good gripping soles
- Be careful when walking on compacted snow – it may have turned to ice
- Take an extra look before you cross the road and do not attempt to cross if there are vehicles approaching – remember snow and ice increases the distance that vehicles need to stop
- **Be Seen to Be Safe!** Visibility is reduced in poor weather conditions so wear high visibility clothing or carry a torch. As children often journey to school in the dark, make sure your child can be seen
- Be extremely careful in the vicinity of open water, canals, lakes, ponds or coastal piers etc
- Never walk on frozen waterways
- In order to protect yourself if you fall, avoid walking with your hands in your pockets
- **NB: Always consult with your Team Leader before you leave the home with an individual and agree if it is safe to do so.**

Advice to Cyclists

Consider your safety first - controlling two-wheeled vehicles in snow or icy conditions is extremely difficult and there is an increased danger of a collision with a vehicle that is out of control

Consider taking alternative transport or walking

CONTACT INFORMATION

Emergency Services

If you have an emergency please phone the emergency services at

112 or 999

Remember to have phone numbers for your, doctor, chemist, children's schools, local authority, Garda station, service providers and family members conveniently to hand so that you can locate them easily should an emergency arise.

Aertel

Contact details and other updated information will be posted on AERTEL page 592 during severe weather events.

Services

ESB Networks LoCall 1850 372 999

Bord Gais LoCall 1850 20 50 50

Weather Forecast

You can obtain the latest weather forecast from the following sources:

Visit the homepage of Met Éireann website – www.met.ie

Listen to national and local radio hourly news bulletins

Watch weather reports after TV news bulletins

Aertel pages 160 - 163

To see a five-day forecast from Met Éireann

Met Éireann website – www.met.ie/forecasts/5day-ireland.asp

To see the Rainfall radar from Met Éireann

Met Éireann website - www.met.ie/latest/rainfall_radar.asp

HSE Map Centre

The Health Service Executive has a facility on the homepage of its website www.hse.ie called Map Centre. You can use this facility to locate health services in your area. Just enter your address and choose an option to find your nearest hospital, pharmacy, doctor, Garda station, nursing home or dentist. Directions are provided from your home to the required service.

Transport

The website www.transport.ie provides links to all public transport providers. Click on Severe Weather Updates on the homepage and go to your required area of information. During disruption, the individual transport provider sites are updated on a continuous basis.

The following are contact details for Public Transport providers. You should also keep to hand contact information for your local private transport operators. 16

Bus

Twitter: @buseireann **Facebook:** /buseireann **Bus Éireann Local Customer Service Numbers**

Ennis (065) 6824177

Galway (091)562000

Limerick (061) 313333

Contractors List if required during or after severe weather damage

See contractor list under finance section on the Brothers of Charity Clare Team Site