



CITY OF HARRISONBURG
FIRE
DEPARTMENT

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HFD issues safety tips to all residents ahead of winter weather

HARRISONBURG, Va. – Harrisonburg fire officials are calling on citizens to be prepared by contributing to their own safety before, during and after an impending winter storm.

The National Weather Service is predicting a significant weather event beginning tomorrow. As such, the Harrisonburg Fire Department (HFD), which views local residents as partners in safety, is providing essential information intended to decrease the risks commonly encountered during severe weather.



People should not be afraid of severe weather, but they should be prepared. These storms can create many hazards, including wrecks on icy roads, suffering a heart attack while shoveling snow, or developing frostbite or hypothermia from the extreme cold. Strong winds, extreme cold, heavy snow and ice from these storms can knock down trees and utility poles, isolate homes and farms, and cause structure damage.

Keep this information in mind:

Before the storm

When preparing, think about the potential loss of power, heat, telephone service and the shortage of supplies in case a storm lasts for an extended period. Make sure to have these items available in your home or at work:

- Battery powered NOAA Weather Radio
- First Aid Supplies
- Flashlight and extra batteries
- Extra water and high calorie, nonperishable foods
- Extra medicine and supplies to care for infants and the elderly
- Emergency heating source such as a fireplace, wood stove or space heater (Use properly to avoid a fire, and make sure to ventilate properly!)
- Fire extinguisher and functioning smoke alarms

After the storm:

- Clear sidewalks and driveways promptly to prevent slips and falls. Use “short work/long rest” cycles to reduce the chance of overexertion which can lead to exhaustion, heart related problems and medical emergencies.
- Check on your neighbors – even in the current pandemic. Use proper physical distancing and wear a mask and take the time to check on at-risk individuals who may need assistance.
- Adopt-A-Hydrant: Clear fire hydrants located near your property three feet in all directions to help firefighters use them in an emergency.
- Portable generators are useful when temporary or remote electric power is needed, but they also can be hazardous. The primary hazards to avoid when using a generator are carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning from the toxic engine exhaust, electric shock or electrocution, fire and burns.
- Every year, people die in incidents related to portable generator use. Most of the incidents associated with portable generators involve CO poisoning from generators used indoors or in partially enclosed spaces.

Carbon Monoxide Hazards:

- When used in a confined space, generators can produce high levels of CO within minutes. When you use a portable generator, remember that you cannot see or smell CO. Even if you do not smell exhaust fumes, you may still be exposed to CO.
- If you start to feel sick, dizzy or weak while using a generator, get to fresh air RIGHT AWAY. DO NOT DELAY. The CO from generators can rapidly kill you.
- NEVER use a generator inside homes, garages, crawlspaces, sheds or similar areas, even when using fans or opening doors and windows for ventilation. Deadly levels of carbon monoxide can quickly build up in these areas and can linger for hours, even after the generator has shut off.
- Follow the instructions that come with your generator. Locate the unit outdoors and far from doors, windows and vents that could allow CO to come indoors.
- Install battery-operated CO alarms or plug-in CO alarms with battery back-up in your home, according to the manufacturer’s instructions.

Fire Hazards:

- Never store fuel for your generator in the home. Gasoline, propane, kerosene and other flammable liquids should be stored outside of living areas in properly labeled, non-glass safety containers. Do not store them near a fuel-burning appliance, such as a natural gas water heater in a garage.
- Before refueling the generator, turn it off and let it cool down. Gasoline spilled on hot engine parts could ignite.
- Dress for the Season: Wear loose, lightweight, warm clothes in layers. Trapped air insulates. Remove layers to avoid perspiration and subsequent chill. Outer garments should be tightly woven, water repellent and hooded. Wear a hat. Half of your body heat loss can be from your head. Cover your mouth to protect your lungs from extreme cold. Mittens, snug at the wrist, are better than gloves. Try to stay dry!

The Harrisonburg Fire Department is an ISO-Class II All-Hazards agency providing essential emergency and non-emergency life safety services to the public who live, work and travel in Harrisonburg. More information about the Fire Department is available on-line at www.harrisonburgva.gov/fire or on Facebook®, Twitter® and Instagram®.

The City of Harrisonburg is centrally located in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. It is home to approximately 54,000 people. More information about the City of Harrisonburg is available online at www.HarrisonburgVA.gov.



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