



Severe Winter Weather

Severe winter storms may include snow, sleet, freezing rain, or a mix of these wintry forms of precipitation. Severe winter weather can down trees, cause widespread power outages, damage property, and cause fatalities and injuries.

Local Planning and Regulations

WW-1 Adopt and Enforce Building Codes

Buildings and infrastructure can be protected from the impacts of winter storms with the following regulations:

- Adopting the International Building Code (IBC) and International Residential Code (IRC).
- Ensuring the development and enforcement of building codes for roof snow loads.
- Discouraging flat roofs in areas that experience heavy snows.

Structure and Infrastructure Projects

WW-2 Protect Buildings and Infrastructure

Buildings and infrastructure can be protected from the impacts of winter storms with the following techniques:

- Adding building insulation to walls and attics.
- As buildings are modified, using new technology to create or increase structural stability.
- Retrofitting public buildings to withstand snow loads and prevent roof collapse.

WW-3 Protect Power Lines

Power lines can be protected from the impacts of winter storms with the following techniques:

- Establishing standards for all utilities regarding tree pruning around lines.
- Burying overhead power lines.
- Using designed-failure mode for power line design to allow lines to fall or fail in small sections rather than as a complete system to enable faster restoration.
- Installing redundancies and loopfeeds.

WW-4 Reduce Impacts to Roadways

The leading cause of death during winter storms is from automobile or other transportation accidents, so it is important to consider ways to lessen roadway impacts. Potential strategies include:

- Planning for and maintaining adequate road and debris clearing capabilities.
- Using snow fences or “living snow fences” (e.g., rows of trees or other vegetation) to limit blowing and drifting of snow over critical roadway segments.
- Installing roadway heating technology to prevent ice/snow buildup.

Education and Awareness Programs

WW-5 Conduct Winter Weather Risk Awareness Activities

Public awareness of severe winter storms can be improved through the following efforts:

- Informing the public about severe winter weather impacts.
- Producing and distributing family and traveler emergency preparedness information about severe winter weather hazards.
- Including safety strategies for severe weather in driver education classes and materials.
- Encouraging homeowners to install carbon monoxide monitors and alarms.
- Educating citizens that all fuel-burning equipment should be vented to the outside.

WW-6 Assist Vulnerable Populations

Protect vulnerable populations from the impacts of severe winter storms through the following efforts:

- Identifying specific at-risk populations that may be exceptionally vulnerable in the event of long-term power outages.
- Organizing outreach to vulnerable populations, including establishing and promoting accessible heating centers in the community.

Other winter weather-related mitigation actions may also apply to other hazards. See the sections entitled “Extreme Temperatures” and “Multiple Hazards” for other possible ideas.



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