

Be Winter-Ready Booklet

The booklet can be downloaded from the website www.winterready.ie or by writing to The Office of Emergency Planning, National Emergency Co-Ordination Centre, Agriculture House (2 East), Kildare Street, Dublin 2

An Irish language version is also available. Copies are available by contacting the Office of Emergency Planning

The contents of these pages are provided as an information guide only. They are intended to enhance public access to information for preparing and dealing with severe weather events. While every effort is made in preparing material for publication no responsibility is accepted by or on behalf of the Government Task Force on Emergency Planning or the Office of Emergency Planning for any errors, omissions or misleading statements on these pages or any site to which these pages connect.

www.winterready.ie



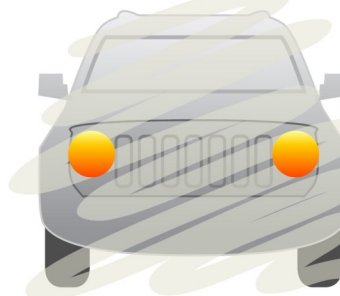
@emergencyIE

LoCall: 1890 252 736 or 0761 001 608

e-mail: oep@defence.ie



BE WINTER-READY



Helping make you, your home and your business more resilient and prepared for severe weather



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Coronavirus COVID-19

Know the symptoms, if you have any, stay at home and ring your GP.

Ensure proper sneeze/cough etiquette.

Wash hands regularly.

Always maintain social distancing.

Wear face coverings as required.

Download the COVID Tracker App,
available on covidtracker.ie

All travel should be considered in line with current
Government guidance.

Government advice remains that people should avoid
non essential foreign travel.

All content in this booklet should be considered
in the context of relevant Public Health advice.

Coronavirus COVID-19



Coronavirus
COVID-19
Public Health
Advice

Stay safe. Protect each other.

Continue to:



Wash

your hands well
and often to avoid
contamination.



Cover

your mouth and nose
with a tissue or sleeve
when coughing or
sneezing and discard
used tissue safely



Distance

yourself at least
2 metres (6 feet) away
from other people,
especially those who
might be unwell



Avoid

crowds and
crowded places



Know

the symptoms. If you
have them self isolate
and contact your GP
immediately

COVID-19 symptoms include

- > high temperature
- > cough
- > breathing difficulty
- > sudden loss of sense of smell or taste
- > flu-like symptoms

If you have any symptoms, self-isolate to
protect others and call your GP for a
COVID-19 test.

#holdfirm

For more information
www.gov.ie/health-covid-19
www.hse.ie

Ireland's public health advice is guided by WHO and ECDC advice



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Important Phone Numbers

| | | |
|--|------------|---------------------|
| EIRCODE | | |
| Doctor | | |
| [Name] | [Phone] | [Alternative Phone] |
| Veterinary Surgeon | | |
| [Name] | [Phone] | [Alternative Phone] |
| Dentist | | |
| [Name] | [Phone] | [Alternative Phone] |
| Neighbour | | |
| [Name] | [Phone] | [Alternative Phone] |
| Other Emergency Contact | | |
| [Name] | [Phone] | [Alternative Phone] |
| School | | |
| [Name] | [Phone] | [Alternative Phone] |
| School | | |
| [Name] | [Phone] | [Alternative Phone] |
| Garda Síochána | 999 or 112 | [Alternative Phone] |
| Fire/Ambulance Service/ Coast Guard | 999 or 112 | [Alternative Phone] |
| Service Providers | | |
| Gas | [Phone] | [Alternative Phone] |
| Electric | [Phone] | [Alternative Phone] |
| Water | [Phone] | [Alternative Phone] |
| County Council | [Phone] | [Alternative Phone] |



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland



Notes

City and County Councils

| Council | Website | Phone Numbers | |
|--------------------|--|----------------|---|
| | | Office Hours | Out of Office Hours |
| Laois Co. | www.laois.ie | (057) 866 4000 | (057) 866 4000 |
| Leitrim Co. | www.leitrimcoco.ie | (071) 962 0005 | (071) 962 0005 |
| Limerick City&Co. | www.limerick.ie | (061) 496 000 | (061) 417 833 |
| Longford Co. | www.longfordcoco.ie | (043) 334 3300 | 1850 211 525 |
| Louth Co. | www.louthcoco.ie | (042) 933 5457 | (042) 933 5457 |
| Mayo Co. | www.mayococo.ie | (094) 902 4444 | (094) 903 4706 |
| Meath Co. | www.meath.ie | (046) 909 7000 | 1890 445 335 |
| Monaghan Co. | www.monaghan.ie | (047) 30 500 | Monaghan: 087 650 1833 Carrickmacross / Castle- blayney: 087 687 3154 Ballybay / Clones: 087 204 1672 Monaghan Town: 087 242 4222 |
| Offaly Co. | www.offaly.ie | (057) 934 6800 | 1890 750 750 |
| Roscommon Co. | www.roscommoncoco.ie | (090) 663 7100 | (090) 663 7100 |
| Sligo Co. | www.sligococo.ie | (071) 911 1111 | Roads 087 2600111 (Town) 087 7789935 (County) Water/Waste 1890 278 278 |
| South Dublin Co. | www.sdcc.ie | (01) 414 9000 | (01) 457 4907 |
| Tipperary Co. | www.tipperarycoco.ie | 0761 06 50 00 | Roads / Housing: 1890 923948 Water: 1890 278 278 |
| Waterford City&Co. | www.waterfordcouncil.ie | 0761 10 20 20 | 0761 10 20 20 |
| Westmeath Co. | www.westmeathcoco.ie | (044) 933 2000 | (044) 933 2000 |
| Wexford Co. | www.wexfordcoco.ie | (053) 919 6000 | 1890 666 777 |
| Wicklow Co. | www.wicklow.ie | (0404) 20 100 | (01) 291 6117 Water/Waste Emer- gencies: 1890 278 278 |

Sea

For Arrivals/Departure Information visit the following websites:

| Ferry Service | Website | Phone Numbers |
|------------------|--|---------------|
| Irish Ferries | www.irishferries.com | 0818 300 400 |
| StenaLine | www.stenaline.ie | (01) 2047777 |
| P&O Ferries | www.poferries.com | (01) 6869467 |
| Brittany Ferries | www.brittanyferries.ie | (021) 4277801 |

City and County Councils

| Council | Website | Phone Numbers | |
|------------------------------|--|----------------|--|
| | | Office Hours | Out of Office Hours |
| Carlow Co. | www.carlow.ie | (059) 917 0300 | (059) 917 0300 |
| Cavan Co. | www.cavancoco.ie | (049) 437 8300 | (049) 437 8300 |
| Clare Co. | www.clarecoco.ie | (065) 682 1616 | 087 416 9496 |
| Cork Co. | www.corkcoco.ie | (021) 427 6891 | (021) 480 0048 |
| Cork City | www.corkcity.ie | (021) 492 4000 | (021) 496 6512 |
| Donegal Co. | www.donegal.ie | (074) 915 3900 | Water: 1850 278 278 Roads: (074) 917 2288 |
| Dublin City | www.dublincity.ie | (01) 222 2222 | (01) 679 6186 |
| Dun Laoghaire / Rathdown Co. | www.dlrcoco.ie | (01) 205 4700 | (01) 677 8844 |
| Fingal Co. | www.fingalcoco.ie | (01) 890 5000 | (01) 890 5000 |
| Galway Co. | www.galway.ie | (091) 509 000 | (091) 509 069 |
| Galway City | www.galwaycity.ie | (091) 536 400 | (091) 536 400 |
| Kerry Co. | www.kerrycoco.ie | (066) 718 3500 | (066) 718 3588 |
| Kildare Co. | www.kildare.ie/countycouncil | (045) 980 200 | 1890 50 03 33 |
| Kilkenny Co. | www.kilkennycoco.ie | (056) 779 4000 | 1890 252 654 |

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INTRODUCTION

We hope that this revised edition of our Winter Ready Booklet will assist households in preparing for severe weather and coping with it when it actually happens.

Remember that everyday tasks which we take for granted become more difficult or even hazardous in severe weather, yet by taking some simple steps you can reduce the impact of such events.

During periods of severe weather, it is important to obtain the latest information, by listening to the weather information and weather warnings from Met Éireann, usually delivered during the weather forecast. Information will also be available during severe weather on the Twitter page of the Office of Emergency Planning @emergencyIE and Met Éireann.

We have also included contact details for organisations and agencies that can provide further guidance and assistance.

We encourage everyone to keep an eye on older neighbours and relatives during periods of severe weather. They will inevitably have more difficulty than usual in getting about, to buy food and medical supplies and to attend their medical appointments. Remember that they may not have access to the latest information from the internet and social media, so they will really benefit from ongoing personal contact.

The booklet is published by the Office of Emergency Planning, on behalf of the Government Task Force on Emergency Planning.

We have a lot more information and useful links on our website, www.winterready.ie

Tá leagan Gaeilge den leabhrán seo ar fáil freisin.

Our main message is simple, - Be Prepared, Stay Safe and know where to find help should you need it.

Rail

Iarnrod Éireann incl Intercity/Dart/Commuter Rail – Customer Service Number – 1850 366 222

Twitter:@irishrail Facebook: /iarnrodeireann

Luas Services – Customer Service Number – 1800 300 604

Twitter:@luas Facebook: /luas

Air

For Arrivals/Departure Information is available at the airport websites:

www.dublinairport.com, www.corkairport.com, www.shannonairport.ie

See: Aertel pages 571 - 576

Twitter: @daa, @corkairport, @dublinairport, @shannonairport

| Airport | Website | Phone Numbers |
|----------------------------------|--|----------------------|
| Dublin Airport | www.dublinairport.com | (01) 8141111 |
| Cork Airport | www.corkairport.com | (021) 4313131 |
| Shannon Airport | www.shannonairport.com | (061) 712000 |
| Ireland West Airport Knock | www.irelandwestairport.com | (094) 9368100 |
| Waterford Airport | www.flywaterford.com | (051) 846600 |
| Kerry Airport | www.kerryairport.com | (066) 9764644 |
| Sligo Airport | www.sligoairport.com | (071) 9168280 |
| Donegal Airport | www.donegalairport.ie | (074) 9548284 |
| Aer Arann Islands | www.aerarannislands.ie | (091) 593034 |
| Belfast International Airport | www.belfastairport.com | +44 (0) 28 9448 4848 |
| George Best Belfast City Airport | www.belfastcityairport.com | +44 (0) 28 9093 9093 |
| City of Derry Airport | www.cityofderryairport.com | +44 (0) 28 7181 0784 |

| | |
|-------------|---------------|
| Galway | (091) 562000 |
| Killarney | (064) 6630011 |
| Letterkenny | (074) 9121309 |
| Limerick | (061) 313333 |
| Monaghan | (047) 82377 |
| Sligo | (071) 9160066 |
| Stranorlar | (074) 9131008 |
| Tralee | (066) 7164700 |
| Waterford | (051) 879000 |

Bus Éireann School Transport Offices

| Services in Counties | Email Addresses | Phone Nos |
|---|--|--------------------------------|
| Westmeath, Longford, Offaly, Roscommon, Laois | st.athlone@buseireann.ie | (090) 6473277 |
| Mayo | st.ballina@buseireann.ie | (096) 71816 |
| Dublin, Kildare, Wicklow, Meath | st.dublin@buseireann.ie | (01) 8302222 |
| Louth, Monaghan, Cavan | st.dundalk@buseireann.ie | (042) 6825900 |
| Cork | st.cork@buseireann.ie | (021) 4557137 (021) 4557129 |
| Clare, Limerick, Tipperary (North) | st.limerick@buseireann.ie | (061) 217484 |
| Galway | st.galway@buseireann.ie | (091) 537530 |
| Sligo, Leitrim | st.sligo@buseireann.ie | (071) 9160440 |
| Donegal | st.stranorlar@buseireann.ie | (074) 9131008 |
| Waterford, Tipperary South, Carlow, Kilkenny, Wexford | st.waterford@buseireann.ie | (051) 873401 |
| Kerry | st.tralee@buseireann.ie | (066) 7164750 |



To be Winter Ready, you need to be aware of the weather conditions in your area, so that you can PREPARE

Met Éireann weather forecasts are available on RTÉ (radio and TV), on the independent local and national radio stations and on www.met.ie and the Met Éireann app.

In general, warnings will not be issued more than 60-hours ahead of the expected adverse weather but advisories on potential hazards are issued up to a week in advance.

Impacts from wind/rain/snow etc., vary depending on location, recent weather conditions, the state of ground, the time of year as well as the duration of the event. In particular the timing and location of the occurrence of extreme weather can significantly affect the impact which extreme weather may have on society, or on the economy.

Download the Severe Weather Chart and pin up in your classroom.

Weather Warnings are presented in three categories:


STATUS YELLOW - Be Aware

Weather that does not pose a threat to the general population but is potentially dangerous on a localised scale.

The concept behind YELLOW level weather alerts is to notify those who are at risk because of their location and/or activity, and to allow them to take preventative action. **Be aware** about meteorological conditions and check if you are exposed to danger by nature of your activity or your specific location. Do not take any avoidable risks.

STATUS ORANGE - Weather Warning - Be Prepared
Infrequent and dangerous weather conditions which may pose a threat to life and property.
Prepare yourself in an appropriate way depending on location and activity. All people and property in the affected areas can be significantly impacted.
Check your activity/event and delay or cancel as appropriate.

STATUS RED - Severe Weather Warning - Take Action
Rare and very dangerous weather conditions from intense meteorological phenomena.
Take action to protect yourself and your property.
Follow instructions and advice given by the authorities under all circumstances and be prepared for exceptional measures.

| | STATUS YELLOW | STATUS ORANGE | STATUS RED |
|--|--|---|--|
| | Weather that does not pose a threat to the general population but is potentially dangerous on a localised scale. | Infrequent and dangerous weather conditions which may pose a threat to life and property. | Rare and very dangerous weather conditions from intense meteorological phenomena. |
|  www.met.ie/warnings | | | |
| Wind Mean wind: 10 minute (higher on coasts/high ground/funnelling effects etc) | Widespread mean speeds between 50 and 65km/h and/or Widespread gusts between 90 and 110km/h | Widespread mean speeds between 65 and 80 km/h and/or Widespread gusts between 110 and 130 km/h | Widespread mean speeds in excess of 80 km/h and/or Widespread gusts in excess of 130 km/h |
| Coastal Wind Warnings Mean speeds up to 30 nautical miles offshore | Gale force 8 or strong gale force 9. | Storm force 10. | Violent storm force 11/Hurricane Force 12. |
| Rain Amounts can be up to double on windward upper slopes & impacts vary with soil moisture deficits | 20mm – 30mm in 6 hrs or less. 30mm – 40mm in 12 hrs or less. 30mm – 50mm in 24 hrs | 30mm – 50mm in 6 hrs or less. 40mm – 60mm in 12 hrs or less. 50mm – 80mm in 24 hrs | Greater than 50mm in 6 hrs or less. Greater than 60mm in 12 hrs or less. Greater than 80mm in 24 hrs or less. |
| Snow/Ice Heavy rain can turn to snow when temperatures are around zero (up to around +4C) | Guidelines only 3cm or greater in 24hrs. | Guidelines only 3cm or greater in 6 hrs 5cm or greater in 12 hrs 10cm or greater in 24 hrs | Guidelines only 10cm or greater in 6 hrs 15cm or greater in 12 hrs 30cm or greater in 24 hrs |
| Low temperature/ice Ground temperatures can be as much as 10 degrees lower than air temps | Air minima of minus 3C or minus 4C expected over a wide area (localised lower values will occur). • Dangerous surfaces due to ice and/or lying snow. Situation improving. | Air minima of minus 5C to minus 10C (or lower) expected over a wide area. • Dangerous surfaces due to ice and/or lying snow/freezing rain. Situation stable. | Air minima minus 10C (or below) for three consecutive nights or more. Maxima of minus 2C. • Dangerous surfaces due to ice and/or lying snow/freezing rain. Situation likely to worsen As orange criterion, but persisting for five or more consecutive nights. |
| High temperature High minima can be more impactful than high maxima | >27/15/>27 Maxima in excess of 27C expected and minima in excess of 15C over 36 hrs | >30/20/>30/20/>30 Maxima in excess of 30C for three days and minima of 20C for two nights (consecutive) | Exceptional. |
| Thunderstorms Possible flash flooding | Localised thunderstorms/lightning activity/heavy rainfall. | Widespread thunderstorms/severe lightning activity/heavy rainfall/large damaging hail | Exceptional. |
| Fog (or freezing fog) | Dense fog over a wide area or pockets of freezing fog. | Dense fog/freezing fog persisting over a wide area causing a widespread and significant driving hazard on national primary routes. | Exceptional. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">Met Éireann is the National Meteorological Service of Ireland and issues weather forecasts and warnings to ensure the protection and safety of life and property and to enhance support for impact-based decision making for weather eventsWarnings are issued by the duty forecaster up to 48-hours in advance. The main suite of warnings are generally issued between 10am and midday but are updated as necessary. Advisories on potential hazards are issued up to a week in advanceImpacts from wind/rain/snow etc. vary depending on location, recent weather conditions, state of ground, time of year as well as duration | | | |

Download the Severe Weather Chart and pin up in your classroom.

Remember

During severe weather, stay well back from exposed coastal areas (e.g. coastal cliffs, piers and beaches, etc.) and do not put yourself in a dangerous position near breaking waves.

HSE Map Centre

The Health Service Executive has a facility on the homepage of its web-site 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.dttas.gov.ie provides links to all public transport providers. During Severe Weather 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.

Bus

Dublin Bus Routes – Customer Service Number - (01) 8734222
Twitter: @dublinbusnews Facebook: /dublinbusnews

Bus Éireann Intercity/Commuter Bus Services

Twitter: @buseireann Facebook: /buseireann

Bus Éireann Travel Centres

| | |
|----------|---------------|
| Ballina | (096) 71800 |
| Cavan | (049) 4331353 |
| Cork | (021) 4508188 |
| Drogheda | (041) 9835023 |
| Dublin | (01) 8366111 |
| Dundalk | (042) 9334075 |



Contact Information

Emergency Services

If you have an emergency please phone the emergency services at

112 or 999

In the event of any emergency on water, including offshore, along the coastline, on inland waterways, lakes or rivers call **112 or 999 and ask for the Coast Guard.**

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.

Services

| | |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| ESB Networks | LoCall 1850 372 999 |
| Gas Networks Ireland | LoCall 1850 20 50 50 |
| Irish Water | LoCall 1890 278 278 |

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



The HOME in Winter

Be Prepared

- Have a small supply of non perishable, easy-to-prepare foods
- Keep extra supplies of essential medication in case it is difficult to get to the doctor/pharmacy
- Have an adequate supply of fuel for heating/cooking and if possible a suitable alternative should the main supply fail
- Have batteries for torches and alternative light sources in the event of power cuts
- Have a water container to ensure a supply of drinking water
- Know how to turn off your water supply
- Keep mobile phones charged up - have local emergency numbers in your phone
- Have a suitable snow shovel (but any shovel or spade will do)
- Know your EIRCODE

Are you ready for snow and freezing conditions?

- Snow clearing is strenuous—do not attempt it unless you have a reasonable standard of fitness and do not have an underlying medical condition. Wear suitable clothing and boots or shoes with a good grip
- Clear the snow earlier in the day - do not use boiling water as it will freeze over and cause a hazard

Be Prepared – prevent pipes freezing and protect your water supply



- Insulate water tanks and pipes: Protect exposed pipes, including attic pipes, from freezing and cracking with lagging or by wrapping a towel around them
- Service your boiler: Your boiler needs to be serviced regularly by an accredited plumber to run efficiently and to keep your home or business warm. If not, leaks could freeze and cause a breakdown and costly repairs
- Keep your home warm: Minimising all draughts, leaving heating on low for long periods and opening doors to allow warm air to circulate to unheated areas of your house will help prevent pipes and tanks from freezing in the cold weather
- Fix external dripping taps: It is recommended you always fix any dripping taps but pay particular attention to external dripping taps in winter as water from them can freeze on the ground and can cause people to slip and injure themselves
- 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)

Whether the school should open later in the day where an improvement to the weather is forecast is a decision which should be taken in consultation with An Garda Síochána, the local authorities, school transport services and other appropriate agencies based in the school's area.

Warning of Status Red that arises during the school day

Where the Status Red weather warning related to wind is issued when the school is already underway with students and staff present, the school management should immediately contact An Garda Síochána, the school transport services and other appropriate agencies for advice on whether it may be safe to undertake journeys from the school or when such journeys should commence. Consideration should also be taken as to the safety of parents undertaking journeys to the school to collect children.

Where a decision may have to be taken on health and safety grounds based on the advice available to the school for students and staff to remain on the school premises during a Status Red warning related to wind, then schools should plan for such an eventuality by considering how students and staff can be accommodated within the school while awaiting an improvement in the weather. Such decisions should be taken based on the health and safety of all concerned taking account of the prevailing and forecast weather conditions in the vicinity of the school.



Status Red Weather Warning

All weather warnings of Status Red will require some action on behalf of schools. Schools need to assess the potential impact of such weather events taking account of past experiences and in light of advice on the current event from the principal response agencies in their area.

A Status Red weather warning for heavy rain may be particularly relevant if the local area is at risk of flooding. A Status Red warning related to ice or snow which may compact may cause local issues due to the location of the school and/or the routes taken to reach the school.

Status Red Weather Warning for Wind

Schools should note in particular Status Red weather warnings where strong winds or storm conditions are forecasted. Due to the high degree of unpredictability as to the impact of the weather associated with such a Status Red warning on local conditions schools should use the following guidance to assist them in making their assessment.

Status Red weather warning for wind related conditions may be given in advance of a school opening or it may arise during the day while a school is underway.

Advance Warning of Status Red

Following consultation at a national level with the Office of Emergency Planning and the management bodies for schools, the Department of Education and Skills' advice to schools is that they should consider not opening where a Status Red weather warning related to wind is forecast to coincide with the period/s during which students and staff would be expected to be travelling to and from school.

- Running your taps will not prevent pipes from freezing: This is especially important as this can cause frozen drains and puts undue pressure on supplies across the network

Frozen mains water supply

- If your supply is frozen, be cautious with the 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 and holiday homes should be shut off and drained down in preparation for winter
- Ask keyholders to check premises regularly for possible leaks
- If a leak is detected:
 - * Turn off water supply –stop valve is usually under the kitchen sink
 - * Turn on cold taps to drain the system
 - * Turn off central heating
 - * Turn off electricity supply at main fuse board if leak is near electrical appliances
 - * Call a qualified plumber and/or electrician



For more information on how to protect your water supply during the winter see <https://www.water.ie/support/winter-proofing/>



Advice for Older People and their Families and Neighbours

In winter it can be difficult for everyone to get about and conduct day to day activities. It is even more difficult for older and other vulnerable people.

Advice for older people or infirm

Keeping Well and Warm

- Keep warm, eat well and avoid unnecessary travel. You should eat regular hot meals and drink plenty of fluids, this will keep you warm and will give you energy to keep active
- Ensure you have sufficient supplies of food and of any prescription medicine you may need. Keep active indoors
- Have sufficient fuel supplies to maintain adequate heating in your home
- Ask your relatives and neighbours for help if you need it. Keep their phone numbers on a list beside your phone

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 outside during the cold weather
- Consider wearing a personal alarm so that family or neighbours are alerted if you fall

Guidance on time lost due to unforeseen closures as a result of severe weather is set out in circular 16/2014 which is available on the Department's website www.education.ie.

Weather Warnings from Met Éireann

Schools should monitor weather forecasts in order to be prepared for any severe weather which may affect the school.

Weather Warning Alerting Services

Push notifications for all weather warning levels (yellow, orange and red) for your location are available on the latest version of the Met Éireann App. Alternatively, you can also sign up to receive emails/SMS (red only) of weather warnings on our warnings page. Both services are outlined [here](#).

Met Éireann colour coded weather warnings can be found on <https://www.met.ie/warnings/today>

- Status Yellow – be aware
- Status Orange – be prepared
- Status Red – take action

Schools should respond appropriately to such warnings using the above guidance. Detailed descriptions of the criteria and impact considerations can be found in the WARNINGS EXPLAINED section on the Met Éireann web site <https://www.met.ie/weather-warnings>.

It should be borne in mind that there may also be weather events which may be fast moving with little warning. For example, consider the case of Storm Darwin in February 2014 where Met Éireann had issued a Status Red alert for the Cork and Kerry regions; however, on that occasion the weather moved rapidly across the southern half of the country affecting a number of other counties.

There may also be Status Orange weather warnings that may require action to be taken because of the particular local circumstances, e.g. in areas at risk of flooding or areas located on the coast. Any assessment taken by the school for actions necessary should be guided by local knowledge and experience and by way of advice from the principal response agencies.

Closing a School

The decision to close a school rests with the school management authority taking into consideration the full guidance and direction available from the principal response agencies, especially An Garda Síochána. Any decision to close is taken in the interest of child safety, having assessed the local risks and having consulted, as appropriate, with school transport operators.



Some of the issues that schools take into account include:

- conditions in the school itself
- the capacity of the school to ensure the health and safety of students whilst in school
- the ability of parents, students, staff and school transport services to safely negotiate local road conditions to reach the school
- guidance and direction from the principal response agencies

- 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
- Remove rugs or use non-slip tape or backing so rugs will not slip
- Consider installing hand rails on both sides of the stairs

Keep safe this winter.

Keeping an eye on older people and infirm

Try to call on older relatives and neighbours, and offer to assist them in severe weather.

- Ensure that they have sufficient supplies of food and medications
- Ensure that they have sufficient fuel supplies to maintain adequate heating in their homes
- If you have any doubts about the safety of an older or infirm person seek the assistance of the Garda Síochána or local social services



People with Disabilities

Keeping Well and Warm:

- If your disability is affected by a drop in temperature try and be aware of the weather forecast in order to allow you plan for pain management
- Wear the correct amount of layers to try and maintain your body temperature at the required level
- Individuals with reduced mobility should take extra measures to protect their hands, feet and other areas of the body that are particularly subject to cold
- Eat well and avoid unnecessary travel. You should eat regular hot meals and drink plenty of fluids, this will keep you warm and will give you energy to keep active
- Ensure you have sufficient supplies of food and of any prescription medicine you may need. If you have some mobility try and keep active indoors
- Have sufficient fuel supplies to maintain adequate heating in your home
- Ask your relatives and neighbours for help if you need it. Keep their phone numbers on a list or saved onto your phone
- If you cannot talk to people on the phone, make sure you have a relative or friend you can text for assistance if you need it, and register with the emergency services so you can contact them via text if necessary.
- If you have to use medical equipment or a powered mobility device every day please make sure that you always have access to a power supply

Communications

Schools should ensure to have the relevant contact details of the principal response agencies for their area, including An Garda Síochána, fire brigade and local authorities and other appropriate services. Schools should also have contact details for the transport services serving their school. These details should be checked regularly and kept up-to-date.

Schools should establish communications with neighbouring schools to ensure, as far as practicable, a unified local response to severe weather events may be implemented. It is noted however that while schools in an area may try to co-ordinate their decisions, the circumstances can vary between individual schools in close proximity and may on occasions lead to different decisions being taken by schools.



Most schools use a text messaging service to communicate with parents and staff. Local radio, the school's website or social media may also be useful to alert parents and students to school conditions and closure should this arise.

State Examinations

In the event of severe weather during scheduled state examinations the State Examinations Commission will communicate with schools to put in place alternative arrangements.



Schools and Severe Weather

The following is provided as guidance for school management.

Be prepared Be informed Be vigilant

Preparation

Schools should conduct a pre-event evaluation of what should be, or could be, in place to ensure the opening of the school in the event of severe weather. Areas for consideration are maintenance of school premises and utilities, salting and gritting and transport to and from school. Access in the school to a battery operated radio and flashlights should be put in place.

Schools should ensure that every member of staff is clear as to their role and responsibilities during severe weather including in the event of a school closure. A member of staff should be assigned to monitor weather conditions and to contact the principal response agencies and school transport services where required.

Included in the school's plan for severe weather should be the proposed responses and roles which will apply in the event of a Red level weather warning from Met Éireann.

- Ensure that you are on the vulnerable customer registers for the energy companies and Irish Water
- If you have an assistance dog, be sure to keep them warm as well. Be sure to always have a blanket for the animal to rest on. Keep the animal indoors as much as possible

Personal Safety – Staying Safe:

- Plan for the possibility that winter weather may disrupt your homecare service
- In icy weather, wear well-fitted shoes with non-slip soles if you have to go out but try to limit walking outside during the cold weather
- If you use a mobility device make sure it can grip an icy surface
- If you have a ramp make sure it is well gritted in icy weather
- If you have a mobile phone that you can use make sure it has a charge and bring it with you when you are going out
- Consider wearing a personal alarm so that family or neighbours are alerted if you fall
- If you have a fall, even a minor one, make sure you can visit your doctor for a check up

Keeping an eye on people with disabilities

- If possible, make yourself aware of a relative or neighbour's disability and ask them how best you can help them if required
- Try to call on relatives and neighbours who have a disability, and offer to assist them in severe weather
- Ensure that they have sufficient supplies of food and medications
- Ensure that they have sufficient fuel supplies to maintain adequate heating in their homes
- Ensure that they have access to power and water
- Try to arrange regular visits or phone calls so they don't feel isolated
- If you have any doubts about the safety of someone you know who has a disability seek the assistance of An Garda Síochána or local health and social services



Flooding

In the event of a flood, the local authorities and emergency services will provide the principal response at a local level. **ALWAYS cooperate with their instructions.**

Individuals and communities also play an important role in reducing the impact of floods by being aware of flood risks and potential impacts and by being prepared to take action if and when a flood occurs.

The Office of Public Works (OPW) has a dedicated awareness web-site www.flooding.ie for homes, businesses and farms. This website provides practical information and guidance on being prepared to take action if and when a flood occurs. The OPW has also prepared a handy booklet called "Plan, Prepare, Protect" that is available to view online or download.

Advance planning

Find out if you live in an area at risk of flooding by:

Speaking to neighbours and your local authority

Consulting the OPW flood maps, which show areas that may be at risk of flooding (See www.floodmaps.ie).

If you DO live in an area at risk of flooding, you can greatly lessen the impact of a flood by taking the time to **prepare in advance**:

- Ensure the business has up-to-date employee contact details and a communications plan
- Ensure that management responsibility is clearly assigned for planning and making preparations; identify business critical roles and develop plans for ensuring continuity

Impact on Customers

- Consider how customers may be impacted upon
- Consider the business impact as a result of lower custom
- Consider alternative means to serving customers and what strategies can be employed to minimise disruption, for example, online commerce
- Have in place a communications plan for customers
- Consider how customer safety can be assured within the public areas of the business
- Assess how surrounding pavements and access points can be cleared in the event of snow and ice and make preparations for suitable equipment being available

Impact on Suppliers

- Consider the impact of a disruption to supplies and review stock levels
- Liaise with key suppliers and assess their preparedness in the event of severe weather affecting their businesses
- Consider especially time-sensitive supplies
- Consider alternative transportation routes and logistics channels
- Consider safety of suppliers of goods and services, which may entail access to less frequented areas of premises

- Are access points liable to difficulties, for example, access roads positioned on a slope at risk of ice?
- Are water pipes insulated (including in and around vacant buildings)?
- Ensure that the business has information and contact details regarding key services including local authorities
- Review insurance cover and contact insurance advisors in relation to any concern a business may have

Impact on Employees

- Consider the potential impact as a result of employees being unable to attend the place of work
- Consider how alternative work practices could minimise disruption , for example, teleworking, shift-work and consider how the Human Resource Management practices in the business can cater for disruption
- Consider what additional measures need to be taken to ensure employees can work safely, while at work



- Make a flood plan for your family or business so that everyone knows what to do and where to go in case of a flood
- Make up a flood kit and ensure everyone knows where to find it
- Check if you have flood insurance and consider if there are any physical improvements to your property that you could make to reduce the likelihood of flood damage

Be Prepared

A typical **flood plan** for your home should include:

- Emergency numbers – have a print-out and store electronically on your phone
- List of most valuable possessions – know where they are so you can move them quickly to safety
- Store valuable documents in a watertight container – passports, birth certificates, insurance policy, etc.
- Gas and electricity – know where the shut off points are
- Have a prearranged place that you can safely move your car to if you have time
- Have medication to hand (if needed)

A **flood kit** should include a torch, some warm and waterproof clothes, a battery or wind-up radio, a mobile phone, rubber gloves, rubber boots, a first aid kit, blankets and children's essentials, if required.

Practice your flood plan. Ensure that everyone knows what has to be done and what is safe to do.

A Flood Event

You should check local news and weather forecasts and heed all weather warnings issued. Be prepared to put into action any plans you have made to deal with flooding in your area including:

Inside and Outside

- Turn off gas and electricity

- Move valuables and other items to safety above the flood level or upstairs if possible
- Disconnect washing machines and dishwashers
- Put sandbags (or other suitable flood resistant barriers) at any openings where the water could enter your house
- Move vehicles to high ground if possible
- Remember, floodwater could get into your garage – keep any chemicals or fuel in watertight containers and if possible move to above flood level to ensure that they do not spill into the flood water and cause an additional 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, if safe to do so
- Move livestock and pets to a safe location
- Note the location of any manholes or service chambers and keep clear of these during a flood, as their covers may be dislodged

Evacuation

Despite all precautions, it may still be necessary to evacuate your home or business.

ALWAYS cooperate with instructions from emergency services and local authorities.

After a Flood

- Always be careful when re-entering your property after a flood as there may be structural damage or contamination as a result of floodwater.
- The Health Service Executive provides health advice for flood events at www.hse.ie.
- Have any electric, gas or fuel-based service checked by a professional before re-entry following a flood.
- Record any damage caused (photo and video) and check with your insurance company as to what may be covered by your policy.
- See www.flooding.ie for further advice.



Business Sector

Preparing Your Business for Severe Weather

Every business has a number of challenges to overcome to ensure business continuity in the event of severe weather. Preparation is key to minimising disruption during such events.

The relevant Department has prepared a practical checklist for the business sector which outlines key issues to address as part of business continuity planning for, and in response to, severe weather events. The checklist is available in the document at www.dbei.gov.ie under Publications: Business Continuity Planning in Severe Weather.

Practical considerations on how a severe weather event can affect operations include:

Impact on Place of Business Consider how various severe weather scenarios can affect the place of work, that is, the site and buildings.

- Is the location or access to it at risk of flooding? Read the flooding section of this booklet carefully. Get more information from the website www.flooding.ie





Other Hazards

Be careful when using equipment which you may not have used for some time:

- Be sure that it has been serviced properly and is in good working order
- Do not “Risk It” - if you do not really know how to use the equipment get someone to advise you or find out how to use it
- Particular care is needed while using chainsaws - see the booklet “Safe Working with Timber and Chainsaws” on the HSA website www.hsa.ie

Electricity

Get a copy of the booklet “Farm Well....Farm Safely” from the ESB Networks website www.esb.ie - it tells you all you need to know about using electric equipment on your farm.

- Stand-by generators. Special regulations apply to the connection and use of generators
- The connection must be installed by a qualified electrician
- ESB must be notified of proposed operation of a generator
- Incorrect connection can cause a ‘back-feed’ posing a risk to yourself, other consumers and maintenance staff

Flooding - General Safety Advice

- If possible avoid contact with floodwater as it may be contaminated or polluted, for example with sewage
- Don’t try to walk, cycle or drive through floodwater
- If you have to leave your vehicle, be wary of strong currents and debris
- 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
- Keep away from sea and flood defences and fast moving water
- Owners of high axle vehicles such as trucks or tractors might be asked for help in getting through flooded areas

Remember

150mm (6 inches) of flowing water can sweep you off your feet and 600mm (2 feet) of water can float your car.





Road safety

Is Your Vehicle Winter-Ready?

You should get your car serviced before winter sets in to make sure it is ready for the conditions which will undoubtedly arrive when least expected! There are some things you can do yourself:

- Lights - Make sure all your indicators and headlamps are clean and working
- Liquids - Make sure the water reservoir is up to the maximum mark and correctly mixed with anti-freeze. You may also need to top up your coolant and screen wash
- Oil - Check your dipstick and top up the oil if necessary. Look for signs of leakages on the ground under the car
- Electrics - Check your dashboard before and after starting the engine. Listen for a weak battery and replace if necessary
- Windscreen wipers - you should clean them regularly and replace them every 12 months
- Tyres - Check your tyre treads and pressure, including the spare. While the minimum legal limit is 1.6mm, a minimum tread of 3mm is advised for winter driving
- Safety Assist - Check your vehicle's owner's manual and find out if it has any safety assist technology e.g. ABS

Flooding on the Farm

Read the flooding section of this booklet carefully. Get more information from the website www.flooding.ie

If your farm is in an area at risk of flooding:

- Move your livestock to areas you can access if flooding risk is high
- Carefully assess the depth of floods before driving through them
- Only use suitable vehicles if you have to drive through floods
- Secure valuable equipment and fuel supplies in suitable locations so that they are not ruined by water





Looking After Livestock

- Do a fodder budget in spring to establish feed requirements for next winter
- Build in a reserve of 1-2 bales per head, particularly on heavy land types
- Maximise grass growth during the main growing season to build a reserve of winter feed
- Get your silage analysed. Meal supplementation rates must be based on silage quality
- Have grit and salt available to ensure access to sheds in the event of snow or icy conditions
- Have a plan to deal with a power outages

You can get more information from: animalwelfare@agriculture.gov.ie

Animal Welfare Helpline: 0761-064408 and 01-6072379

Be Prepared - Emergency equipment to have in your car

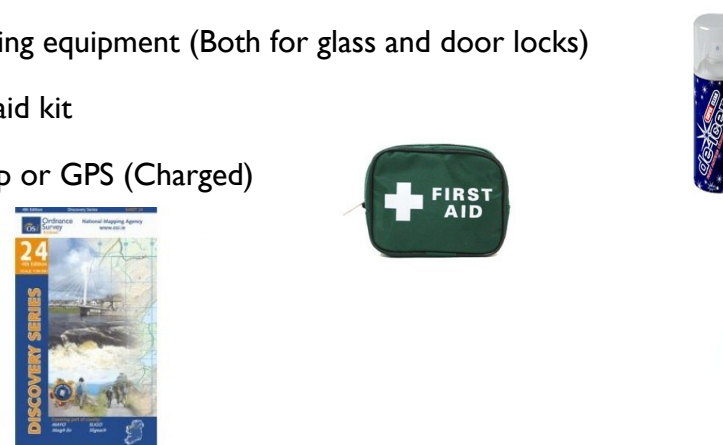
- High Visibility Vest
- A hazard warning triangle
- A torch with batteries - check it monthly



- Tow rope
- A shovel
- Jump Leads
- A Fuel Canister
- Spare fuses and bulbs



- De-icing equipment (Both for glass and door locks)
- First aid kit
- A Map or GPS (Charged)





- Appropriate clothing and footwear in case you have to leave your vehicle
- Have a charged mobile phone
- Some simple supplies to sustain yourself (drink and food)



Planning a journey in winter

Do you really have to travel by car? You could:

- Consider delaying your trip until the weather and road conditions improve
- Use public transport where available

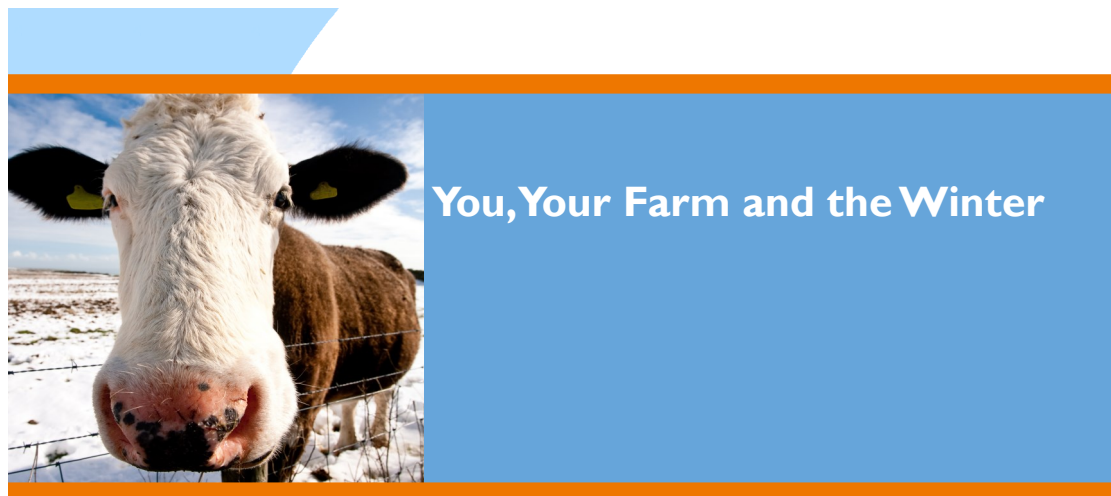
If you really have to travel by road, be prepared for severe conditions

- Ensure your vehicle has a more than adequate supply of fuel for the journey. If possible keep your fuel tank full in winter.
- Check your emergency equipment.
- Allow extra time and drive with caution. Let someone know your route and when you expect to arrive.

Cold Weather and Snow

- Plan how you will get food and water to your stock
- Prevent your machinery and water supplies freezing up:
 - * Have thermostatically controlled heaters in the pump house
 - * An insulation blanket/plastic sheet placed at the entrance to the milking parlour may help prevent milking machines freezing up
 - * Drain wash-down pumps
- Check the antifreeze levels in all your engines
- Have a plan to clear routes around your farm buildings, and a stock of gritting material and salt
- When searching for animals in snow, wear high-visibility clothing so you can be easily seen
- If there are essential tasks on the farm which require more than one person, farmers should not hesitate to ask for help from family and/or neighbours but should ensure that social distancing is observed





Stay Safe

Farming is always a dangerous occupation and it is even more so when severe weather arrives.

Now is the time to PLAN in order to minimise the effects of severe weather on your farm and your family.

Look after your Personal Safety

- Before going out on your land always tell someone where you are going, and how long you will be gone for
- Wear suitable layers of clothing
- Carry a charged mobile phone and a torch
- Never use a stand-by generator indoors, as fumes from the engine can be lethal
- Be sure that equipment (for example a chainsaw) which you may not have used for some time is fully serviceable and that you use it correctly. See www.hsa.ie for more detail
- All persons engaged in farm related activity should follow NPHET advice on Covid-19 and be particularly vigilant where large numbers of people are gathered, for example, in Co-ops or Marts, where social distancing guidelines must be strictly observed

- Check to see if there are any problems on your intended route before you leave. Information is available from Transport Infrastructure Ireland, website www.tiitraffic.ie and you can follow them on Twitter @TIITraffic.
- You could also check the AA Roadwatch website www.aaroadwatch.ie or follow them on Twitter @aaroadwatch. 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.
- If you do not know your route, and are using SatNav/GPS, be sure it does not bring you over a dangerous route, such as across mountainous terrain or along narrow back-roads, which may be hazardous due to snow and ice. e.g. Sally Gap, Co Wicklow or Barnesmore Gap, Co Donegal. Do not rely totally on a SatNav/GPS, look at your route on a map.
- More detailed advice on using the roads in Severe Weather can be found on the Road Safety Authority website www.rsa.ie/Road-Safety/





Driving in hazardous conditions

Remember the following serious hazards:

- Snow and ice will always be worse in mountainous areas and higher ground – try to route around such places. There is information about road conditions and road temperatures on www.tittraffic.ie/weather/
- Beware of high sided vehicles in strong winds, particularly when overtaking. If you are driving a high sided vehicle try to anticipate exposed sections of roadway where winds will be stronger
- Beware of fallen trees or other debris
- Leaving your vehicle is dangerous, wear a high visibility jacket and use your hazard lights to enable other traffic to avoid collision with your vehicle. However, on a motorway, it is safer to get out of your car and stand behind the safety barrier. Call for assistance immediately

Communities Working Together

Irish communities have faced several extreme weather events in the recent past. These extreme weather events have caused millions of euro worth of damage and disrupted the supply of electricity and water to hundreds of thousands of households nationwide.

To minimise the impact of future extreme weather events, we must prepare together and understand the practical steps that we can take to protect ourselves and our communities. Recent surveys carried out show that while growing numbers of people are taking steps to prepare for winter each year, further improvement is possible. We need to grow awareness of the threats we face, as well as the solutions and supports that are available to us.

Many of the steps we can take are quite simple, for example, acquiring a high visibility vest and keeping a stock of bottled water. Communities have valuable local knowledge, for instance, where black ice tends to form on roads. As part of their Winter Service Plans, several local authorities nationwide provide salt bins and a fill of salt to community groups as well as making grit available at multiple locations. Can you volunteer to spread salt or grit on minor roads in your area to keep them open? If your area is prone to flooding, are sandbags available nearby? Do you know who to contact in the local authority to get these provisions?

We need to become better informed to be winter ready, but more than this, we need to be proactive and act on the information that we have. It is crucial to take the time to consider our situation this winter and make the necessary preparations, individually and as communities.

Our message is simple. We need to be informed, prepare in advance and work together in our communities to be winter ready each year. Irish communities have successfully faced extreme weather events in the past, and we will continue to remain alert and prepare for future challenges moving forward.



Available Supports for Communities

Seniors Alert Scheme (SAS)

Are seniors in your area aware of the Seniors Alert Scheme? The SAS supplies emergency alarm pendants for seniors.

For further information, please visit www.pobal.ie

CLÁR Programme

The Department of Rural and Community Development has provided funding under the CLÁR programme to provide support for emergency responders in disadvantaged rural areas.

Details on eligibility and the application process are published on the Department's website www.drcd.gov.ie

Libraries

Libraries are welcoming spaces at the centre of the community where people can access newspapers, books, online resources, free WiFi, computers and communal spaces. People can go to their libraries to reflect, connect and learn.

For more information on the services you can access at your local library, please see www.librariesireland.ie

Volunteering

Ireland has a strong tradition of volunteer activity. From checking in on vulnerable neighbours to staffing helplines, formal and informal volunteers have made a huge contribution during recent extreme weather events.

For more information on how you can contribute to your community, please see www.volunteer.ie

Hail Showers Major contributor to injuries and fatalities



Hail is probably the greatest winter hazard for the driver: even if the road is salted hail will stay on the road.

Be aware of weather forecasts indicating the possibility of hail

If you do encounter hail slow down but try not to brake





Health Preparedness

As we come into the winter months, COVID-19, influenza and other respiratory viruses will circulate at increased levels within our communities. Influenza and other respiratory viruses have similar symptoms to COVID-19 and all spread from one person to another. COVID-19, colds and flu are caused by viruses, so they aren't usually treated with antibiotics.

COVID-19

Common signs and symptoms of COVID-19 include:

- A fever (temperature of 38 degrees Celsius or above)
- A cough
- Shortness of breath or breathing difficulties
- Loss or change to your sense of smell or taste

It can take up to 14 days for symptoms to show after coming into contact with the virus. It is very important that if you are concerned about any of the above symptoms that you, or your family, may be experiencing, that you (or your family member) self-isolate (stay at home and avoid contact with others) and call your GP. Getting an early diagnosis means you can get the help you need and take steps to avoid spreading the virus, if you have it. For more advice, please visit the HPSC website <https://www.hpsc.ie/>

Colds

Symptoms of a cold include sore throat, sneezing, blocked or runny nose, cough and feeling unwell. While you have a cold you should drink plenty of liquids, get lots of rest at home and eat healthily. A cold usually comes on gradually and most adults will start to feel better after 3 or 4 days and be fully recovered by 7 days, although young children may take a little longer to fully recover.

Know Your Community

Is your community based around an apartment building, a housing estate, a street, a road or a village? Is there a local residents' association or community alert group?

Neighbourhood Supports

Do you have your neighbours' contact details? How can you help each other? For example, do you or your neighbour have an off-road vehicle or medical experience?

Planning

What emergencies might your community have to plan for? For example, fire, flooding, snow, power outage, water shortage or accessibility problems.

Vulnerable Neighbours

Are some of your neighbours particularly vulnerable? For example, older people, people with disabilities or mobility problems, neighbours with young children or people without access to transport.

GENTLE REMINDER:

CHECK ON YOUR OLDER RELATIVES AND NEIGHBOURS

- If it's difficult for you to get around it will be impossible for them.
- Do you have their phone number(s)?
- Phone them or call around
- Make sure they have enough fuel, food supplies and necessary medications
- Remind them to keep their mobile phone charged
- If in doubt call the Gardaí and ask them to check



You, Your Community and the Winter

Building Strong Communities

The Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD) has a unique role to play in fostering the links that bring communities together. Our mission is to “**promote rural and community development and to support vibrant, inclusive and sustainable communities throughout Ireland.**” For more information on our work, please see www.drcd.gov.ie

Strengthening community links helps to improve preparedness for emergencies. Experience has shown that active preparation leads to a better response in an emergency, which in turn, leads to the best possible outcome for all concerned. This preparedness enables the community to come together to use locally identified resources (people and equipment) during an emergency affecting their community, such as the flooding and heavy snowfall of recent years.

Although the response to challenging weather events is coordinated by the Office of Emergency Planning (OEP), communities have an important role to play in emergencies. Central to this is neighbours knowing each other and working together. Being prepared, knowing your neighbours and working together will help to ensure that you and your community are winter ready in the months ahead.

Flu

Influenza (flu) is a virus that comes on suddenly and makes you feel unwell. Symptoms of flu include fever, muscle aches, cough and tiredness which develop quickly, along with feeling very unwell. Most people start to feel better after 5 to 8 days although a cough and general tiredness may last for 2 to 3 weeks.

It can be difficult to tell the symptoms of flu apart from the symptoms of COVID-19. If you develop these symptoms you need to self-isolate (stay at home and avoid contact with others) and contact your GP by telephone. Your GP will advise you if you need to be tested for COVID-19.

Usually you do not need to see the doctor, as most flu can be treated at home by drinking plenty of liquids, getting lots of rest and eating healthily. People with flu are usually infectious a day before symptoms start and remain infectious for 5 or 6 days. If you have the flu, stay at home and try to avoid all unnecessary contact with others during this time to avoid spreading the illness to them. Discourage any visitors. You can avoid spreading the flu germs by coughing and sneezing into a tissue, binning the tissue immediately and washing your hands with soap and water afterwards. Alcohol based hand gels are also effective. If you don't have a tissue you can cough or sneeze into the inside of your elbow.

Some people are at-risk at risk of complications of flu, like pneumonia, which may mean admission to hospital. People at-risk include:

- Those 65 years and older
- Children, especially younger children
- Pregnancy
- Residents of nursing homes and other residential care facilities
- Those with chronic illness, like heart disease, lung disease, diabetes, cancer, People with Down Syndrome.

If you are in one of these risk categories, you should contact your Doctor about getting the free flu vaccine. If you are in one of these at risk categories and you get flu you should contact your doctor by telephone, as you may need special anti-viral medicines. These work best if started within 48 hours of the start of flu symptoms.

Flu vaccine

Influenza (flu) is a very infectious illness caused by the influenza virus that affects the lungs and the airways. It can be severe and cause complications like pneumonia and bronchitis. These can lead to serious illness and death. Flu is more severe in people aged 65 years and over, pregnant women, and anyone with a long-term medical condition. Flu vaccination can prevent flu.

The flu vaccine is strongly recommended for:

- People aged 65 years and over
- Pregnant women
- People (adults and children) with long-term medical conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, liver, kidney disease, cancer, chronic lung disease including COPD, or neurological diseases
- People whose immune system is impaired due to disease or treatment including cancer patients
- Persons who are obese who have a body mass index (BMI) of over 40
- People with Down syndrome
- Residents of nursing homes and other long-stay institutions
- Healthcare workers
- Carers and household contacts of people at medical risk of the complications of flu
- People with regular close contact with poultry, water fowl or pigs.

Flu vaccine is also recommended for children aged 2 to 12 years for the 2020/2021 influenza season.

Ask your GP, practice nurse or pharmacist for your free flu vaccine.

If you are 65 or older or have a long-term medical condition, you should also ask your GP (doctor), practice nurse or pharmacist about the pneumococcal vaccine, which protects against pneumonia. You usually only need to get pneumococcal vaccine once. You can get this vaccine on the same day as the flu vaccine from your GP.

Visit www.immunisation.ie for more information about the flu and pneumococcal vaccines and follow @hseimm on Twitter.

Staying healthy during COVID-19

Taking care of our mental health and being there for others is important as we face into the winter months. The impact of COVID-19 varies across the population. We all cope in different ways and a variety of different factors can disrupt our routines. This can impede on our ability to get out and impact on our social interactions. Changes to the way we live and work during this pandemic, can be challenging for some of us, more than others. This winter, it is more important than ever before, to think ahead and plan the things you can do to mind yourself, and all the people you care about.

The www.yourmentalhealth.ie website provides information and signposting on all mental health supports and services that are available nationally and locally provided by the HSE and its funded partners. You can also call the freephone, YourMentalHealth Information Line to find supports and services 1800 111 888 (any time, day or night).

HSE contact details

Visit HSE.ie for updated factual information and advice.

You can call the HSE Info line 1850 24 1850 from 8am – 8pm Monday to Friday and 10am – 5pm on Saturday.

You can contact us by email at hslive@hse.ie

Twitter – You can send the HSE a message @HSELive and we'll get back to you.

