



Governor John R. Kasich

American Red Cross
Emergency Management Association of Ohio
National Weather Service
Ohio Citizen Corps
Ohio Department of Aging
Ohio Department of Commerce-State Fire Marshal
Ohio Department of Education
Ohio Department of Health

Ohio Department of Insurance
Ohio Dept. of Mental Health & Addiction Services
Ohio Department of Natural Resources
Ohio Department of Public Safety - Ohio EMA
Ohio Department of Transportation
Ohio Insurance Institute
WBNS – 10TV
WCMH – NBC4

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NOAA SAYS A STRONG EL NIÑO WILL INFLUENCE THIS WINTER'S WEATHER
Winter Safety Awareness Week is November 15-21, 2015

Columbus, OH – Hopefully, “Polar Vortex” and “Arctic Blast” will be erased from our vocabulary this winter. According to the National Weather Service (NWS), this winter’s buzz term will be “El Niño.” El Niño is a large-scale, ocean-atmosphere climate interaction that causes a periodic warming in sea surface temperatures across the Pacific. This winter, Ohio could see warmer-than-average temperatures, but cold air outbreaks and snow storms will still likely occur.

To help Ohioans prepare for this year’s cold season, Gov. John R. Kasich and the Ohio Committee for Severe Weather Awareness (OCSWA) are promoting Winter Safety Awareness Week, November 15-21. During this week, Gov. Kasich encourages household and businesses to update their safety plans, replenish their disaster supply kit, and prepare themselves and their property for winter-related incidents.

“Especially before the cold and snowy weather hits, Winter Safety Week is the perfect time to update your supply kits for your home and for your vehicles,” said Sima Merick, executive director of the Ohio Emergency Management Agency. “Check the expiration dates on your nonperishable food. Stock up on bottled water. Refresh supplies in your first aid kits. Ensure you have jumper cables and supplies in your car. Make sure your vehicle is road-ready and winterized. And don’t forget to check the batteries in your flashlights, radios and smoke detectors.”

When the weather is bad, driving can get pretty hectic. Before getting on the road, it’s best to know before you go. Pay attention to weather forecasts and traffic reports. Listen for reports of school and business closings, snow emergencies, traffic delays or road closures. Plan your drive time accordingly.

To help prepare for winter, OCSWA recommends the following:

Prepare your home for winter. Cut and remove low-hanging and dead tree branches. Ice, snow and strong winds can cause tree limbs to break and fall. Have your gutters cleaned. Snow and ice can build up quickly if gutters are clogged with debris. Have auxiliary heaters, furnaces and fireplaces maintenance checked or serviced before using. If using a portable generator, read instructions thoroughly to guard against carbon monoxide poisoning. Review your homeowner’s insurance policy; talk with your insurance agent about the financial risks that winter can bring. Consider purchasing flood insurance.

Prepare winter disaster kits for the home and vehicle. Refresh stored nonperishable foods and bottled water. Change the batteries in your smoke detectors, carbon monoxide detectors and radios. Winter emergency kits should include warm clothing, blankets, flashlights, new batteries, coats, hats, gloves, a battery-operated or hand-cranked radio, first aid kit, and enough nonperishable food and water (one gallon

per person, per day) to sustain every family member for several days. Have stored food, bottled water and supplies for your pets, as well.

Invest in a NOAA Public Alert/Weather Radio. Every home, school and business should have a tone-alert weather radio with a battery back-up. Weather and public alert radios are programmed to automatically sound an alert during public safety and severe weather events. Click on www.nws.noaa.gov/nwr/ for additional information.

Update your disaster preparedness plans. Every home, school, and business should have written plans for the different types of disasters that can occur. Review the plans with the entire family or staff. Everyone should know what to do in the event of a snow or ice storm, a prolonged power outage, a flood or fire. Post contact information for your local emergency management agency. Prepare and practice drills that require sheltering in place and evacuation. Update your emergency contact list and establish a meeting place outside of the home, school or business, where others will know where to find or meet you.

OCSWA is an advocate for emergency preparedness and is comprised of representatives from the following: American Red Cross; Emergency Management Association of Ohio; National Weather Service; Ohio Citizen Corps; Ohio Department of Public Safety – Emergency Management Agency; Ohio Insurance Institute; Ohio Department of Commerce – State Fire Marshal; Ohio Departments of Aging, Education, Health, Insurance, Mental Health & Addiction Services, Natural Resources, and Transportation; NBC4 (WCMH) and WBNS-10TV.

For additional information on winter weather safety and severe weather preparedness, visit OCSWA's site at www.weathersafety.ohio.gov.

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