

Winter/Cold Weather Operations - 2013

How does TVF&R prepare for cold weather systems?

- We constantly monitor weather and make sure our engines, trucks, medics and cars are equipped with chains.
- The Fire District always has incident management teams available to help coordinate resources or activate a fire operations center if a weather event or other disaster affects the region.

How do operations change if a major weather event occurs?

- If a major weather event occurs, staffing may also be enhanced and additional 4x4 vehicles will be deployed to respond to hilly areas more susceptible to snow and ice.
- We may have to be creative about reaching and transporting patients (e.g., TVF&R used a backboard to get a patient down off a hill and into an ambulance during a winter storm in 2008).
- It will take us longer to get to calls when there is snow or ice, particularly in remote or elevated areas so we strongly urge families to have their own disaster preparedness kits.
- During past winter storms, call volume has doubled during peak times. If incidents begin to increase, fire commanders may place a representative at the Washington County 9-1-1 dispatch center to assist with prioritizing calls in TVF&R's service area.
- TVF&R may activate its fire operations center to supply stations with extra resources and support.
- If call volume spikes, emergency agencies like TVF&R may have to prioritize response to focus on the most serious incidents (such as fires and incidents with known life-safety hazards)

What advice can you offer to people to stay safe during cold weather events?

- It's important to exercise safety with home heating equipment.
 - Never use kerosene, propane, or other outdoor-use heaters indoors due to the high risk of carbon monoxide poisoning.
 - Space heaters need space! Many units have exposed surfaces which become very hot. Keep portable heaters at least three feet away from combustibles such as bedding, furniture, and/or drapes.
 - Make sure your portable heater has a "tip switch" which automatically shuts off the heater in the event the unit is knocked over.
 - Keep children and pets away from all portable heaters.
 - Never dry clothes or shoes by placing them on top of a heating unit.
 - Always turn off space heaters when you go to bed or leave the house.
 - Do not store combustibles too close to fireplaces or heaters.
- This is also a good time to prepare yourself for power outages and other problems that happen during the winter months.
 - Gather necessary supplies for your family including flashlights, extra batteries, water, food, blankets, cell phone (vehicle) charger, manual can opener, battery-operated clock, etc. Stock up on food and water, as well as necessary medications.

- Candles are a fire hazard – use only flashlights, battery-operated lanterns, and light sticks as emergency lighting in your home.
 - Prepare your vehicle. Inspect and change fluids (oil, antifreeze, wiper washer, etc.) and ensure your tire tread and brakes are in good working order. Keep your fuel tank at least half-filled and have emergency supplies (flares, blanket, water, cell phone) on hand in case you're stranded. Avoid driving when roads are treacherous.
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- Avoid travel when icy conditions arise.