

## WINTER-STORM EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS: TIPS FOR STUDENTS

### 1. WINTER STORMS ARE DANGEROUS

Winter storms can bring snow, ice, sleet, and freezing rain, sometimes with dangerous wind chill or extreme cold, making for difficult and dangerous situations. Washington, DC, averages over 15 inches of snowfall annually.[1] Blizzards have sustained winds or frequent gusts of 35 mph or more with snow and blowing snow frequently reducing visibility to less than a quarter mile for 3 hours or more. Ice storms are rarer, but can be more damaging. According to the National Weather Service, winter storms are dangerous because winter weather too often catches people unprepared: about 25 percent of all winter related fatalities are people who were caught off guard, out in the storm.[2]

Winter storms cause:

- Hazardous travel conditions
  - Public transportation severely inhibited or curtailed
  - Roads too dangerous to drive on
  - Sidewalks that are impassable or treacherous for walking
  - Entrances and exits at buildings blocked without warning
- Sudden obstacles and loss of services
  - Snow falling from rooves
  - Tree branches breaking under the weight of snow
  - Power cables downed by high winds
  - Power outages
- Individual peril
  - Slipping on snow and ice
  - Threats of frostbite and hypothermia
  - Lack of access to critical services
  - Breakdown in communication

### 2. GALLAUDET'S WINTER STORM RESPONSES

- Decisions to close Gallaudet, delay opening, or close early, are made by the President, the Vice-President for Administration and Finance, or the Provost, with advice from the Facilities Department and the Department of public safety.
- The Department of Public Safety monitors winter-storm conditions on campus, advises the Gallaudet President on closings and late openings, and alerts the Gallaudet community to

changing conditions through the Gallaudet Alert system, the Gallaudet website, and inclement weather hot-lines and on local radio and television stations.

- The Facilities Department takes responsibility for clearing snow, ice, and debris from sidewalks, roadways, and parking areas, sometimes with help from additional contractors..
- The Office for Students with Disabilities advises Facilities and Public Safety on priorities and strategies for making the campus safer for people with disabilities.

### 3. BE PREPARED FOR WINTER STORMS

Avoid travel on campus by foot or car—it is dangerous, and staying inside lets the Facilities Department clear obstacles from campus more quickly. If you must go outside, take what personal precautions you can when moving across campus:

- Wear adequate clothing to protect you.
- Walk or drive with extra caution.
- Keep others informed of your schedule, let someone know travel destination, travel route, and expected time of arrival at your travel destination.
- Travel with friends when you can, because your familiar routes may be inaccessible.

Be as prepared as you can for being snowed in, or in case of power failure. Put together an emergency kit [4,5] for winter storms, including

- 3-gallon (3-day) supply of water
- Food and snacks that won't spoil
- A change of clothing, with shoes
- A blanket
- First-aid kit
- Prescription medications for at least 5 days
- Mobile phone and charger
- Flashlight with extra batteries
- Student ID, cash, credit card

If you must go out, dress for the weather. Frostbite is a serious health condition that can easily occur in 30 minutes or less when there are high winds and temperatures below 0°F. And hypothermia, known as a hazard in cold weather, can even happen in temperatures as high as 60°F, particularly in water. Wearing warm, loose-fitting, lightweight clothing in several layers.

Treat winter storms with the respect they deserve.

#### 4. REFERENCES

[1] WeatherDB, <https://snowfall.weatherdb.com/1/27073/Washington-District-of-Columbia>

[2] National Weather Service, " ", <http://www.nws.noaa.gov/om/winter/outreach.shtml> .

[3] "Inclement Weather" policy, Gallaudet Administration & Operations Manual, section 1.06, <http://www.gallaudet.edu/af/section-1-general/106-inclement-weather.html>

[4] The Department of Public Safety at Gallaudet has a lit of emergency-kit suggestions: <http://www.gallaudet.edu/dps/emergency-preparedness-guide/emergency-and-first-aid-kits.html>

[5] The National Weather Service makes these suggestions for emergency-kit contents: [http://www.nws.noaa.gov/om/winter/resources/Winter\\_Storms2008.pdf](http://www.nws.noaa.gov/om/winter/resources/Winter_Storms2008.pdf)