

Winter Preparedness

For many, being prepared for winter means putting away the summer clothes, checking the pilot light on the furnace or fireplace, making sure your propane tank is topped off, turning off the outside water spigots, and getting out the winter coats. For most folks it's mostly about dealing with colder temperatures and personal comfort.

But let's consider some other things. What can and does happen in Lake Arrowhead in the winter? We've seen it in previous winters - snow, ice, potential power outages due to falling trees or branches, frozen roadways, and surprise freezing rain. Even a small snow accumulation on Lake Arrowhead roads can result in an icy road situation that makes some roads virtually impassible. Here are some suggestions that might help you survive a winter storm event.

1. Stay aware! Weather forecasters have become very good in the last few years at predicting winter weather. They can almost tell you exactly what time to expect temperatures to drop and freezing rain to start. When they start using the "S" word (snow, snow flurries) or the "I" word (ice, freezing rain, accumulation, etc.) in their forecasts - Pay Attention! Knowing there's a potential of a winter weather event tonight before you head out for work in the morning might prevent you from being stuck on a highway, in a gas station parking lot, or sleeping in the paper goods aisle of Publix overnight. Stay aware, adjust your travel schedules if possible, and be prepared to survive the winter weather.

2. Be ready in your car – put together a "go bag" with plenty of water, sleeping bags, blankets, non-perishable foods, flashlights with extra batteries (not in the flashlight but sealed and kept separate), warm clothes, etc. Keep it in your trunk or back seat in case you get stuck outside the gates and need to survive in your car stuck on the road overnight. Have a backup plan in mind in case you can't get back home to Lake Arrowhead. Be ready to divert your trip home to go stay with friends or family if you can.

If the road conditions turn icy and you don't have chains, or a vehicle equipped to drive on icy roads – get off the road completely and safely as soon as possible and be ready to wait it out. Do not attempt to drive home on icy mountain roads – especially inside Lake Arrowhead or in the surrounding areas leading to the community. If you get stuck blocking the roadways, you not only can become a victim, but you also prevent other, better equipped vehicles including emergency vehicles from getting past you in an emergency. If it starts turning icy – turnaround and get back to better road conditions.

3. Be ready at home – when the ice comes and covers your sidewalk or driveway in a sheet of clear, smooth ice - don't try to walk on it. Too many broken hips, arms, or head injuries occur when people disregard the ice and think they can walk on it in leather soled dress shoes with no problem. If you're home when the ice comes – stay home and inside until sidewalks become walkable and the roads become drivable. Call the LAYCC main number at 770-721-7900 and pick option "9" for the latest road conditions inside of Lake Arrowhead.

Pick up a box of de-ice product and keep it dry and by the door. Some recommend getting a 50 lb bag of "water softener salt granules" from the hardware store (\$7-8 for a

40 lb. bag) and keep it handy. Keep in mind that salt and some other chemical products can kill off plants or can damage concrete. Read the labels. Use it to deice only essential walkways enough for safe passage and know that as ice melts and temperatures drop again, it will refreeze again.

One of the biggest problems emergency responders have had in previous years responding to fire and emergency situations besides the icy road conditions were abandoned vehicles blocking the roadways. If you don't have chains, four-wheel drive, or both – stay off the roads so you don't get stuck and become a part of the problem. If you must leave your car, get it as far off the road as you can. If you're not experienced driving in winter icing conditions or don't have the vehicle or tires suited for it – don't even think about going out on icy Lake Arrowhead roads.

If you must walk – walk in the snow or off the edged of the road where there are no smooth surfaces, and the ice does not accumulate. Sports Authority and other suppliers of winter recreational gear sell “shoe chains” that fit on your shoes. Try going to www.tirechains.com/shoechains and get a pair of ice cleats or shoe chains (about \$25) that fit over your shoes. Similar snow cleats are often found at place like Costco, Walmart, and other stores. Keep them and a pair of sturdy walking or hiking boots in your “go bag” in your car. These will allow you better footing and grip on icy surfaces.

WARNING: Don't wear shoe chains on marble floors unless you are a professional ice skater!



If ice accumulation is expected to be heavy, expect power outages and falling timber. Aside from the danger of falling objects, trees weighed down by even as much as a quarter inch of ice may fall or drop heavy limbs and may take out power lines. Power lines themselves many times cannot handle the additional weight of the ice and the lines themselves may come down. In the 17 years we've been here the longest it's been down for us is 3 days. Old timers who have been in Lake Arrowhead for a long time tell stories of 10 to 18 days without power. You must decide how prepared you need to be based on your situation.

If road conditions are severe, keep in mind response from 911 may also be delayed. Do you have adequate fire extinguishers to knock down a small fire if you needed to? Do

you or your neighbors know First Aid and CPR if they had to use it until Emergency Responders arrive?

4. Food and water – If you must “hunker down” and stay inside for a few days until the ice and snow start to melt – you’re going to need food and water. Whether you are staying prepared for winter storms or summer tornado season you should always have 3 to 5 days of food and water available to support you and your family in case of an emergency. The easy to cook or “just add boiling water” variety is great if you’re looking to keep things simple during a prolonged power outage or winter storm event.

It might also be a good idea to refill your prescription medications earlier than usual in winter months so if you end up stuck at home for 3-5 days during an ice storm unable to get to the pharmacy, you don’t run out of essential medications.

If you have pets – don’t forget you’ll need to keep them warm, fed, and watered during a prolonged winter storm. They depend on you to take care of them. Bring them inside where it’s warm and keep in mind smaller pets are more susceptible to frost bite or tissue damage from the colder temperatures than we are (especially since they are barefoot!). If they are out “doing their business”, bring them back inside and off the icy surfaces as soon as possible.

If you have kids or grandkids with you – keep in mind they may be used to TV, video games, and lots of “powered” conveniences and may not adapt easily to a power outage or the need to stay indoors instead of going out. Make an adventure out of it! Pretend you’re living in the “old days” or you’ve ventured deep into space, run out of “anti-matter” or “dilithium crystals” to power your engines, and you’re waiting for a rescue ship to arrive. You might actually get to know them better by telling stories, reading to them, playing some board games or teaching them a new card game, or building a “fort” out of blankets and the dining room furniture. Keep their mind off the storm or outage and occupied with something that doesn’t require electricity! (Good luck).

5. If the power is out - use the water sparingly and keep the “flushing” to a minimum. Water will keep flowing for a while after a power outage because of the large storage tank at the top of Sauder Hill, but keep in mind that the Lake Arrowhead sewer system is also dependant on electrical power to keep things “flowing”. If the power is out the “flow” stops too. Be very conservative.

Aside from having, flashlights and extra batteries, oil lamps, or candles ready for emergency lighting, you might want to consider having a generator and gas to keep essential items such as refrigerators and medical equipment operating until the main power is restored. Generators come in the “automatic whole house” variety that runs off your propane tank and kick on by themselves at the first sign of power outage or you can go with less expensive portable versions that can run your refrigerator and a few essential lights.

If you’re using a portable generator, consider having a “transfer switch” installed that allows you to plug into the house and select which of your household circuits is powered by the generator so you don’t overload the generator and you don’t send power out of your house into the hands of a power company repair technician working to restore power in your neighborhood. Any local electrician can help you pick out what you need for your situation.

Whatever alternate source of emergency power you have, remember to test it or run it periodically throughout the year to ensure it will be ready when you need it and keep the extra fuel available that you'll need to run it for several days. Obviously pay attention to the safety precautions in the owner's manual.

If power is out, there's a chance your telephone line may work (not the fiber-optic, DSL or cable modem phones) unless it too has been brought down by icy lines or falling timber. "Plain Old Telephone Service" (POTS) phone lines operate on their own, independent power source separate from your house electricity. But if all you have is a cordless phone, it won't work if the power is out. You should always keep at least one corded, analog, "touch tone" phone handy so you can plug directly into your phone jack somewhere in the house and still use the phone during a power outage. If you're using "Voice Over IP" (VOIP) phones on a DSL, Cable, or Fiber-optic internet service, you'll need to add a "Battery Backup" to your device so it continues to supply power for the phone line.

Another recommendation is to keep an extra barbecue grill propane tank or two in the garage. If you have an all-electric house and the power is out, you can still cook outside on a barbecue grill. Obviously don't use the barbecue indoors and don't use it as a source of heating. Carbon monoxide gas is a bigger killer in winter months when folks try to use gas space heaters or barbecue grills incorrectly as sources of indoor heat.

6. If you have special needs – if you have mobility issues, need to run electric medical equipment regularly, or must be monitored for medical issues – be sure to let friends, neighbors, or family members know what your situation is. If we have a prolonged power outage or winter storm event that can create problems for you or compound a medical situation, LET SOMEONE KNOW. There is a network of CERT Team members, 4 Wheel Drive Volunteers, and Emergency Responders in Lake Arrowhead who may be able to help if you need it. If we can't bring you what you need to help get you through a winter storm, we may be able to get you out of Lake Arrowhead to the help you need.

Did you know?

We need more team members in all areas of Lake Arrowhead! Several neighborhood areas in Lake Arrowhead have no one close by who is trained to help their neighbors in the event of a disaster. You can be that person! Cherokee County provides the training and equipment. We work as a team to keep up the training and exercises to keep team members ready.

We need people in the following areas:

- North Cherokee Drive, especially areas North along Morse Elm Loop, Indian Oak, Little Coyote Loop and adjoining streets.
- Phase II – especially along Hawks Trail and North Cherokee and adjoining streets.
- North of Chickasaw Lake along Pinebrook, Ridgewood Trail, and adjoining streets.
- Western end of Red Cloud Drive – especially in the areas of Wolverine and Fort Wayne.

- High Point, and the North End of the main Lake – especially near White Antelope, Lone Bear, Broadwater Ct., Silver Fox Loop, and neighboring streets.
- South of North Cherokee in the area of Jack Rabbit, White Eagle, Morning Star and all adjoining streets.

Call Bob Johnston if you're interested or have questions. 678-543-5469 or e-mail him at john316@aol.com.