
**COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION
BOULDER COUNTY**

**B O U L D E R
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G U I D E**

Emergencies and Disasters



**COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION**

INTRODUCTION EMERGENCIES AND DISASTERS

This section covers general emergency and disaster preparedness. Responses to some common natural disasters are covered.

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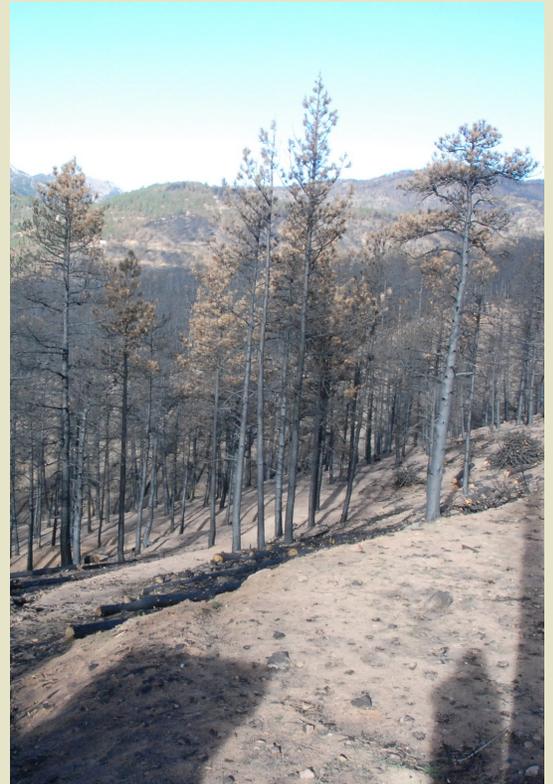
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Handling Emergencies

Wildfire, flooding, tornadoes, hail, high winds and animal disease outbreaks are examples of disasters/emergencies that rural and livestock owners should be prepared to handle. Preparedness ahead of time can save lives, livestock and stress.

General Preparedness

All landowners should have a plan to evacuate yourself, your family, livestock and pets or be ready to shelter in place. Identify at least two different routes out of your area since one may be blocked by the disaster. Learn the name of streets/roads in your area by both their common name and a road number if applicable and make sure you can travel them safely with or without your trailer. Are there pullouts or turnarounds to make it easy to get out of your area and avoid any emergency vehicles?

If you do not have a livestock trailer or in case you are not at home, you need to work out a plan with a neighbor to jointly evacuate or care for your animals. However, if they only have a two-horse trailer and, between the two of you, you have four horses, you have a problem. Depending on the emergency's location and how rapidly it is progressing, you may not have time for a second trip. You may want to pre-evacuate (evacuate prior to notification) if you know that it takes several trips to get all livestock out. Do not count on the county or volunteer organizations to evacuate your livestock.

Prepare a list of what you need for your animals in case of evacuation. Consider having these items set aside (livestock "Go" Bag - halters, medications, buckets and feed) so they are rapidly grabbed during an emergency. During an evacuation is not the time to train your animals to load into a trailer. Practicing ahead of time helps alleviate some stress and potential for injury to you or your livestock. Make sure that all their vaccinations are up to date and that you have documentation of this stored offsite. If you shelter in place, make sure that you have enough feed and a water source for your livestock for multiple days.

Know where your local evacuation facilities are for both human and livestock and both the primary and a secondary location. Find out how they do evacuations and release livestock after the disaster so that you can come prepared both during and after with documentation. Make sure that your animals are branded, chipped or identified in some other manner. If you must leave without evacuating your livestock, attach your contact information to a mane, tail, halter, etc. The identification tag or device should be nonflammable. You can put duct tape on the animal with your contact information or spray paint your phone number on the animal. The Colorado Department of Agriculture (CDA) offers a low-cost microchip horses and provide you with an identification card. They need a group of horses to make it worth their

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time. Contact the CDA for more information on this. Along with your personal papers that you take with you or have stored offsite, you should also keep brand inspections, identification, photos or other appropriate information that will make it easier to identify and retrieve your livestock after the emergency is over. Post event and prior to bringing your livestock home, you need to walk the pastures looking for downed or damaged fence, hazardous debris, etc. Remove hazards prior to allowing livestock out.

You Should Have in Place at All Times

- An emergency plan that every household member knows. The plan should include information on how to shut off electrical power and natural gas sources, safe meeting places out of the high water-risk area, an out-of-area contact, plans for pets and livestock, and a neighborhood safety plan that identifies people who may need extra help. Once you formulate your plan, rehearse it!
- An emergency supply kit containing non-perishable foods, bottled water, first aid kit, necessary medications, flashlights and batteries, personal toiletries, clothing appropriate to the season (change the clothing as the season changes), identification for each family member, some cash and any important family documents. Be prepared to be on your own for at least 72 hours, possibly longer. All perishable items should be changed or replaced every six months or according to their expiration date. Pick at least one date per year such as January 1 to review your plan and kit and revise and update them as needed.
- Have a grab-and-go emergency kit ready for each member of your household as you may have to leave in the middle of the night or on short notice. This kit should have basic essential items such as prescription medications, eye glasses, important papers, flashlight, clothing, identification and some cash.
- A battery-powered or wind-up radio that allows you to access weather warnings and disaster instructions from local radio stations.
- A plan for protecting your home and the tools and items you may need to do so (wrenches for shutting off valves, plastic sheeting or sandbags).
- A full tank of gas in your vehicle.



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Wildfire



The best defense you have against a wildfire is to be prepared and to have created a defensible zone around your home. Your home should have non-combustible materials on the outside and should be maintained to keep leaves and needles out of the gutters and weeds and other combustible materials from accumulating on the roof and around the foundation. Out from the home for 5' should be material that is non-combustible such as gravel or concrete. Zone 1 is the area from 5' – 30' which must be maintained (mowed, trimmed) and consist of nonflammable shrubbery, perennials and mowed grasses. For Zone 2 which goes from 30' to 100', trees and shrubs should be pruned and maintained to limit the amount of fuels. From 100' out to the rest of your property the area should be managed for forest or grassland health. While creating and maintaining a defensible space on your property is no guarantee that you won't lose your home or other buildings, it hopefully increases the odds that the house survives or that firefighters can defend the home safely.

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Wildfire

Wildfire Quick Facts

- Wildfires occur in ALL seasons of the year.
- Wildfires occur in grass, brush, and trees.
- Wildfires occur in all sizes and locations.
- Wildfires occur in both mountains and plains.
 - Wildfires move with incredible speed!



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When creating wildfire defensible space, don't forget the area around your barn, stable, other out buildings and drylot. Barns, stables and other out buildings' defensible space, construction materials, maintenance, and cleanup tasks are the same as for your home.

Exterior materials should be noncombustible, ignition sources limited, and debris build-up should be eliminated. Keep grasses mowed and other litter cleaned up (i.e. leaves and needles in gutters, weeds around the foundation) around barns and corrals. Power sources inside your barn should be hardwired just like your house. You don't want to start a fire by your negligence. Be aware of coffee pots, heaters and other possible ignition sources. Keep flammable materials stored in an appropriate cabinet. Your hay should be dried sufficiently to prevent combustion.

If you can't evacuate your livestock, do not release them to fend on their own. In the smoke and flames or other adverse conditions, they can become disoriented and run into the fire or into a dangerous location such as in front of evacuating neighbors or emergency responders. Do not confine them in the barn but keep them within a fenced area (corral) with little to no vegetation (corral/dry lot). You can leave a halter on but do not leave a lead rope on as it could get caught and tie the animal down in an unsafe location. Check with your local fire department to see if they would like to know what livestock you have. They may have a program where they inspect your barn and provide you with tips to make it safer. Boulder County Sheriff's Office Animal Control can help you with this. Have a fire extinguisher located in the barn. The main power shutoff should be in a prominent location. Sign up for the county's reverse 911 system, and provide the system with home, cell and work phone numbers. Have an emergency water supply (cistern) available for your home and barn/stable and a backup generator, if possible.

Animals can be affected by smoke, ash, and fire retardant if it was used in your area. Check with your veterinarian for treatment recommendations, if needed. Be aware that hay will have ashes in it which may cause respiratory problems. Fire retardant is not advisable for consumption as it contains iron and other proprietary chemicals. If possible, wait to graze livestock until after precipitation or use overhead irrigation to settle ash and retardant.

Expect more incidences/conflicts with wildlife due to lack of vegetation. Keep food and livestock safe (see wildlife section). Clean ash and retardant out of feed bunks and water tanks prior to feeding animals.

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Forest Health and Wildfire Mitigation

The Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) is defined as the area or zone where structures and other human development meet or intermingle with undeveloped lands or vegetative fuels. Wildfires in the WUI are very real and pose a potentially disastrous situation. No area (either plains or foothills/mountains) is immune from the threat of wildfire and this is particularly true within the WUI. To reduce the wildfire risk, the following measures are recommended:

- Thin out continuous tree and brush cover within 30 feet of your home to create “defensible space” around the home site. Ensure tree crowns are spaced at least 10-12 feet apart. Your local Colorado State Forest Service Office can help identify trees to be removed.
- Homes located on a slope need to have a larger defensible space on the downhill side.
- Prune branches from trees within the defensible space to a height of 10 feet above the ground. Remove shrubs, small trees, or other potential “ladder” fuels from beneath trees.
- Remove dead limbs, leaves, and other ground litter within the defensible space. Dispose of all slash and debris left from thinning by removal from site, lop and scatter, chipping or burning.
- Maintain an irrigated greenbelt adjacent to the home using grass, flower gardens, or ornamental shrubbery. Use rock as mulch, avoid bark or wood chip mulch in this area.
- Mow or graze dry grasses and weeds and irrigate the area during periods of high fire danger.
- Clean roof and gutters of pine needles and leaves to eliminate a potential ignition source.
- Stack firewood uphill and at least 15 feet away from your home.
- Have a noncombustible material such as rock or concrete next to the house out 5’ from the house. Keep this area clean of weeds and burnable debris (i.e. leaves).
- Replace combustible materials as economically feasible, i.e. wood shingles, combustible siding.

The action taken now to implement a defensible space project can help to protect your home in the future. Contact your local fire district or Colorado State Forest Service office for help.

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Resources:

Colorado State Forest Service Boulder

<https://csfs.colostate.edu/boulder/>

Addressing the Impacts of Wildfire on Water Resources, CSU Extension Fact Sheet #6.706

<https://extension.colostate.edu/topic-areas/natural-resources/addressing-the-impacts-of-wildfire-on-water-resources-6-706/>

Cheatgrass and Wildfire, CSU Extension Fact Sheet #6.310

<https://extension.colostate.edu/topic-areas/natural-resources/cheatgrass-and-wildfire-6-310/>

Colorado State Forest Service, Protecting Your Home from Wildfire: Creating Wildfire Defensible Zones

https://static.colostate.edu/client-files/csfs/pdfs/FIRE2012_1_DspaceQuickGuide.pdf

Fire Resistant Landscaping, CSU Extension Fact Sheet # 6.303

<https://extension.colostate.edu/topic-areas/natural-resources/fire-resistant-landscaping-6-303/>

Forest Home Fire Safety. CSU Extension Fact Sheet #6.304

<https://extension.colostate.edu/topic-areas/natural-resources/forest-home-fire-safety-6-304/>

Living with Fire: A Guide for the Homeowner. CSFS

<https://static.colostate.edu/client-files/csfs/pdfs/LWF51303.pdf>

Soil Erosion Control after Wildfire, CSU Extension Fact Sheet #6.308

<https://extension.colostate.edu/soil-erosion-control-after-wildfire-6-308/>

FireWise plant materials, CSU Extension Fact Sheet #6.305

<https://extension.colostate.edu/topic-areas/natural-resources/firewise-plant-materials-6-305/>

eXtension
<https://surviving-wildfire.extension.org/>

Extension Disaster Education Network

<https://eden.lsu.edu/educate/resources>

Colorado State Forest Service Fire Mitigation

<https://csfs.colostate.edu/wildfire-mitigation/>

Livestock

Caring for livestock before a disaster

<http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/livestk/01814.html>

Caring for livestock during a disaster

<http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/livestk/01815.html>

Caring for livestock after a disaster

<http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/livestk/01816.html>

Horses Wildfire preparedness for horse owners

<http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/livestk/01817.html>

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Home

Food Safety Issues after a Fire

http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/emergency/food_safety.html

Handling Smoke Damage after a Fire – Getting Soot and Smoke Out

<http://disaster.ifas.ufl.edu/PDFS/CHAP13/D13-17.PDF>

Wildfires: Are you prepared?

<http://www.thehorse.com//ViewArticle.aspx?ID=1900&eID=306221>

HHS/California Fires

<http://www.hhs.gov/californiafires/>

Assessing your home site after a wildfire

<http://www.ext.colostate.edu/drought/assesshome.html>

California Insurance information

<http://www.insurance.ca.gov/wf-con-info/index.cfm>

<http://www.insurance.ca.gov/video/0030VideoHearings/irf-qa-videos.cfm>

Arizona information includes some on insurance

<http://cals.arizona.edu/pubs/natresources/az1294/>

Tax information

<http://www.irs.gov/taxtopics/tc515.html>

California

<http://groups.ucanr.org/HWMMG/>

<http://www.firesafecouncil.org/>

<http://firecenter.berkeley.edu/>

<http://www.fire.ca.gov/>

Nevada Living with Fire

<http://livingwithfire.info/?click=about>

Idaho

<http://www.uidaho.edu/extension/forestry/content/fire>

Insurance

<http://homeinsurance.com/toolsandtips/home-insurance-inventory-checklist.php>

Safety Safely Returning to Your Home After a Wildfire

http://www.extension.org/pages/Safely_Returning_to_Your_Home_After_a_Wildfire

Leave early or stay and defend

<http://stayanddefendinamerica.com/index.htm>

Family Three Questions and Answers Related to Wildfires and Stress

<http://www.ext.colostate.edu/drought/wildstress.html>

Helping Children After a Wildfire: Tips for Parents and Teachers:

http://www.nasponline.org/resources/crisis_safety/wildfire_teachers.pdf

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Ready Colorado

<http://www.readycolorado.com/>

American Red Cross

<http://www.redcrosslv.org/disaster/materials.html>

FEMA

<http://www.fema.gov/areyouready/>

RMIIA

http://www.rmiia.org/Homeowners/Walking_Through_Your_Policy/Home_Inventory.asp

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Floods and High Water

The severity of local high water, and whether or not major high water occurs along tributaries, creeks and rivers in Boulder County, depends mostly on the weather conditions during snowmelt in May and June. The weather determines when and how rapidly snowmelt occurs. Unusually high snowpack naturally raises the possibility of high water, but risk is determined by a combination of events and conditions.

High Water Preparations

- Am I in a risk area:
- Do you live in a low-lying area susceptible to high water?
- Do you know enough about high-water risk?
- Is your property built in a flood plain?
- Can you purchase flood insurance?
- Are there modifications that you can make to your property to mitigate flood damage? If you are just building your house and barn area, place them in areas farthest from the flood waters and at the highest elevation. Due to contaminants that comes in with flood waters, take precautions prior to clean up or allowing livestock to graze.

Heavy, concentrated rain events

- Heavy rains mixed with spring's melting snow, create excessive run-off in rivers and creeks
- Ice jams – upstream water is blocked by ice downstream.

Remember that if rising waters become a threat to your safety, follow the instructions of local emergency officials who are involved in rescue or high-water response operations, including those directing traffic, as water can be deeper than it appears. Keep disaster response routes clear.

Before a high-water emergency:

- Know if you live in a high water-risk area.
 - Sign-up for the local emergency alert system, <https://www.boulderoem.com/>
 - Purchase flood insurance, if needed.
 - Prepare personal emergency supply kits for your home, car and work.
 - Have a grab-and-go kit ready if you must leave your home quickly.
 - Keep important papers in watertight containers and have a record and photographs of your valuables in a safe place other than at home to help with insurance claims.
 - Choose a relative or close friend out of the area as a contact person for family members and friends.
 - If high water is likely in your area, pay attention to the local media for information.
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- Watch for warning signs: increase in height and intensity of water flows, mudslides, debris in creeks, color changes in water, or leaning trees.
- Know that banks of rivers and streams may be unstable and dangerous.
- Teach your children about high water safety.
- Plan for your pets and any livestock.
- Have plans in place in case you are not at home
- Check on elderly or disabled neighbors to ensure they are aware of the situation.
- Prepare an evacuation plan with several routes from your home to a safe area or be prepared to climb to safety.
- Do not drive or walk through flooded areas. As little as 6” of water can knock a person down and 12” can move a car.

If you are at risk, there is much you can do now to prepare. High water may occur in the area where you live, and although your home may not be immediately affected, you may be cut off from outside resources (phone, electricity, safe drinking water, road access) and even members of your household.



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Resources:

Colorado Department of Homeland Security

<https://dhsem.colorado.gov/info-center/readycolorado/colorado-hazard-information/flood>

National Weather Service

<https://www.weather.gov/safety/flood-states-co>

City of Boulder

<https://bouldercolorado.gov/flood/prepare-for-floods>

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High Winds and Tornadoes

Structures should be built to withstand high winds. Know the weather signs and if you are in a tornado prone area consider building a tornado shelter. Just because you don't live on the eastern plains does not mean that you won't experience a tornado. Most Colorado counties have had at least one tornado in recorded history.

If you do not have a tornado shelter, go to an interior room on a lower floor away from windows and doors. Interior bathrooms without windows are good shelters.

Resources:

Colorado Division of Homeland Security
<https://dhsem.colorado.gov/info-center/tornado>
Adams County Government
<https://www.adcogov.org/tornado>

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Earthquake

The Front Range of Colorado is prone to earthquakes due to fault lines that run along the foothills. While it has been a while since Boulder County has experienced a quake, some southern counties have been experiencing quakes in the last few years.

Build structures to withstand normal earthquake strength. Shoddy construction contributes to damage.

Should an earthquake occur shelter under a table or desk that you can hold onto and move with for protection against falling objects and breaking glass.

Resources:

Division of Homeland Security

<https://dhsem.colorado.gov/info-center/earthquake>

United States Geological Survey

https://www.usgs.gov/faqs/what-can-i-do-be-prepared-earthquake?qt-news_science_products=0#qt-news_science_products

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Landslides

Landslides may occur due to natural geology in an area, excess precipitation, earthquake activity or vegetation removal due to wildfire or other disturbance. Consult an engineer to determine if your property is prone to landslides. Locate new buildings in locations to not compound the problem. Know the warning signs of land slipping (leaning trees, cracks in foundations, large cracks in the slope). Maintain vegetation to keep the soil in place. When driving in the mountains, be vigilant for areas with rocks that may fall onto the road or your car. If you see rocks on the highway, drive slower and be vigilant.

If a landslide occurs and you get caught in it outside of your car, roll into a ball protecting your head. If you see signs of the land sliding, evacuate the area and notify local emergency responders.

Resources:

Colorado Division of Homeland Security

<https://dhsem.colorado.gov/landslide-rockslide>

United States Geological Survey

https://www.usgs.gov/natural-hazards/landslide-hazards/science/landslide-preparedness?qt-science_center_objects=0#qt-science_center_objects

Colorado Springs Government

<https://coloradosprings.gov/pikes-peak-regional-emergency-management-colorado-springs/page/landslide>

Center for Disease Control

<https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/landslides.html>

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Drought

Periodic drought in Colorado is something we have learned to deal with on a routine basis. A water shortage can have considerable impact on local communities, including both urban and rural dwellers. To help everyone, Colorado State University has established the following key messages. For specific management options or for additional educational resources please call or drop by the CSU Extension or NRCS office.

Key messages for farmers:

- During drought conditions, farmers may want to focus their limited water resources on their most productive acres and crops.
- While dry land farmers have few options during drought, research at CSU shows it's important to avoid plowing or disking the soil to manage noxious weeds.
- Living with drought conditions can add more stress to the lives of farmers and their families. Boulder County Extension has resources and information to help families deal with this.
- While drought is part of Colorado weather cycles, research at CSU indicates that our hot, dry, and windy conditions may be the normal pattern in the future.

Key messages for ranchers:

- In drought conditions, locate a hay source and confirm a price early in the season. It is also important to verify hay quality and presence of weeds and other foreign matter. Consider taking a hay test or analysis to verify nutrient levels prior to purchase.
- Ranchers are encouraged to protect their grazing land for the future and avoid overgrazing during a drought.
- Ranchers may be able to rent additional pasture, wean early or take other measures to avoid overgrazing during a drought.

Key messages for foothills and small acreage residents:

- During a time of drought, it's important for households, especially those in the foothills, forests, and other isolated areas, to prepare for wildfires by performing fire mitigation on the property and the area directly around the home and out buildings are free of potential fuel such as trees, brush and pine needles.
 - During drought conditions, locate a source and confirm a price earlier rather than later. It is also important to verify hay quality and weed presence and other foreign matter.
 - Small acreage owners are encouraged to protect their grazing land for the future and avoid overgrazing during a drought.
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Resources:

<http://www.ext.colostate.edu/menudrought.html>

<https://extension.colostate.edu/topic-areas/natural-resources/managing-small-acreage-pastures-during-and-after-drought-6-112/>



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Blizzards and Winter Driving

Winter in Colorado can bring 70 degree days in January, limb breaking snowstorms in September and blizzards in the spring. Weather in Colorado is unpredictable and residents need to be prepared for the weather to change within hours.

Blizzards can leave rural residents stranded for several days while they and the county road crews clear roads and highways. Rural residents should be prepared to be stuck at home possibly without power for several days. Having an alternate electric supply (generator) or heat source (fireplace) and food and supplies is a good decision.

Colorado often experiences drastic changes in temperatures. It may be 70 degrees F during the day and several hours later it may be 0 degrees F. It may stay in those zero to sub zero temperatures for multiple days. Knowing how to protect water pipes from freezing will keep you from having a mess to clean-up. This can be as simple as allowing faucets to slowly drip or having heat tape on those pipes that are most vulnerable.

Winter driving in Colorado means snow, sleet, and ice that can lead to slower traffic, hazardous road conditions, hot tempers, and unforeseen dangers. To help you make it safely through winter, here are some suggestions from the National Safety Council to make sure that you and your vehicle are prepared. At any temperature - 20 degrees Fahrenheit below zero- or 100-degrees Fahrenheit above, weather affects road and driving conditions and can pose serious problems. It is important to listen to forecasts on radio, TV, cable weather channel, or forecasts in the daily papers. Colorado Department of Transportation <https://www.cotrip.org/home.htm>

Prepare your car for winter. Start with a checkup that includes:

- Checking the ignition, brakes, wiring, hoses and fan belts.
 - Changing and adjusting the spark plugs.
 - Checking the air, fuel and emission filters, and the PCV valve.
 - Inspecting the distributor.
 - Checking the battery.
 - Checking the tires for air, sidewall wear and tread depth.
 - Checking antifreeze level and the freeze temperature (temperature at which it will freeze).
 - Your car should be maintained per manufacturer's recommendations to ensure better gas mileage, quicker starts and faster response on pickup and passing power.
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Necessary Equipment

An emergency on the road can arise at any time and you must be prepared. In addition to regular maintenance, a full tank of gas, and fresh anti-freeze, your trunk should carry:

- A properly inflated spare tire, wheel wrench and jack
- A shovel
- Jumper cables
- Tow and tire chains
- A bag of salt or cat litter
- Tool kit

Essential Supplies

Be prepared with a "survival kit" that should always remain in the car. Replenish after use.

Essential supplies include:

- Working flashlight and extra batteries
- Reflective triangles and brightly-colored cloth
- Compass
- First aid kit
- Exterior windshield cleaner
- Ice scraper and snow brush
- Wooden stick matches in a waterproof container
- Scissors and string/cord
- Non-perishable, high energy foods like unsalted canned nuts, dried fruits, and hard candy. Replenish periodically according to the expiration dates.

In addition, if you are driving long distances under cold, snowy, and icy conditions, you should also carry supplies to keep you warm such as: Heavy winter coats, woolen mittens, socks, cap, blankets or sleeping bags.

If You Become Stranded:

- Do not leave your car unless you know exactly where you are, how far it is to possible help, and are certain you will improve your situation by leaving the car.
 - To attract attention, light two flares and place one at each end of the car a safe distance away. Hang a brightly colored cloth from your antenna.
 - If you are sure the car's exhaust pipe is not blocked, run the engine and heater for about 10 minutes every hour or so depending upon the amount of gas in the tank.
 - To protect yourself from frostbite and hypothermia use woolen items and blankets to keep warm.
 - Keep at least one window open slightly. Heavy snow and ice can seal a car shut.
 - Eat hard candy to keep your mouth moist.
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Resources:

Ready.gov

<https://www.ready.gov/winter-weather>

Parker Police Department

<http://www.parkerpolice.org/1816/Be-Prepared-Winter-StormBlizzard>

Red Cross

<https://www.redcross.org/get-help/how-to-prepare-for-emergencies/types-of-emergencies/winter-storm.html>

Center for Disease Control

<https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/winter/beforestorm/preparehome.html>

