

Security Spotlight

An informational Guide for Securitas Canada Clients and Employees



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Winter's Double Danger: Cold and Carbon Monoxide



Winter can be a wonderful time of the year.

Many parts of the country are blanketed with dazzling white snow. Winter sports lovers enjoy an abundance of skiing, ice skating, and sledding. And the kids all love building snowmen and snow forts for spectacular snowball fights! Yes, winter can be a joyous time, so long as you can retreat from the cold to the warmth inside your home. Unfortunately, winter is also a time when snow and ice storms play havoc with the power lines and leave many homes and businesses without heat or light. Be prepared to stay warm and protect your client's property and your own home.

Stay Warm and Safe at Work

If you are on duty when a winter power outage strikes, you must be prepared. The simplest action you can take to stay warm is to add layers of clothing, so be sure to store the clothing you may need in your car or, if allowed, on the job site. Layering properly involves three types of clothing. Your first layer should be made of a fabric that will wick your perspiration away from your body and keep you dry. Thermal, or "long," underwear is generally best for this layer. The second layer is the insulating layer. The purpose of this layer is to trap your body heat. Fabrics such as

fleece or wool are generally best for this layer. The third layer is protection against the weather. This layer should be of a fabric that will repel outside moisture, but still allow your sweat to evaporate.

Cover your hands, head, face, and feet properly too. Waterproof gloves and boots are a must and several layers of socks and a scarf are highly recommended. You may have to change your inner layer if it should become wet from perspiration, so be sure to have an extra set of inner layer garments on hand. You can find more information on layering by going to this travel information website http://gocanada.about.com/od/canadatravel/planner/tp/keep_warm_in_winter.htm.

Your client may or may not have emergency generators. This may mean limited or no lighting or heating at the site. This is where your flashlight can become a lifesaving tool. Check the batteries on a regular basis and always have a fresh backup set on hand. When patrolling, use the light to illuminate your path, but do not keep it focused on the ground all the time. Move the light around so that you are also aware of what is in front, above, and on the sides of your path. Make sure there are no obstacles, pitfalls, or hazards in your direction of travel before you take that next step. If your route takes you near buildings or under trees or

structures (scaffolds, towers, etc.) beware of falling ice and snow. As a security professional, and depending on your Post Orders, you may need to use your skills in observing, reporting, and assisting in response to incidents, such as:

- People trapped outside in cold weather, possibly in a disabled vehicle.
- Broken or poorly sealed windows, doors, skylights, vents, and other openings.
- Obstructions to heaters, piping systems, radiators, burners, or boilers.
- Unsafe walkways and floors inside or outside where ice, snow, or water presents a hazard.
- Temperatures below 40 degrees Fahrenheit in buildings equipped with wet-pipe sprinkler systems.
- Fire protection equipment stored in a location where it might freeze.
- Persons trapped in a disabled elevator.

You should be extra vigilant to ensure that no unauthorized personnel gain access to the premises. Be alert and, as per your Post Orders, lock doors and gates as necessary. Remember to document the details of the power outage and the actions you take in response to the outage. You will need to know how long the power outage may last, so be sure to have a battery operated radio handy.

Stay Warm and Safe at Home

Helpfulness is a common value in Securitas employees. If you have power during an emergency, consider inviting family or friends to stay with you until their power is restored. If you lose power and it is possible for you to travel safely, you should consider staying with family or friends who have electricity or you could stay in a designated public shelter. Take steps to protect your water pipes from freezing. First fill containers with water for drinking in case you are without power for an extended period. You can also fill a bathtub with water to use for flushing toilets. Then, shut off the water supply to your house by closing the water supply inlet valve. If you are not able to shut off the water coming into your house, you should slightly open all the faucets in the house so that there is a slight trickle of water coming out of the faucets. Flowing water will not freeze as quickly as standing water. You can find more advice about protecting water pipes on the CTV news website. <http://toronto.ctvnews.ca/as-temperatures-dip-six-tips-to-avoid-freezing-pipes-at-home-1.1626965>.

If you have a generator, you can use it to power electric space heaters, depending on its power output. Prepare in advance and have ready at least ten gallons of gasoline, stored in approved containers. Honda Canada has advice on safe operation and use of generators at <http://powerequipment.honda.ca/safety/generators>. Here are a couple of their important safety tips.

- Never operate a generator inside the home, including in the basement or garage.
- Do not hook a generator up to your home's wiring. Connect the equipment you want to power directly to the outlets on the generator.

If you use space heaters, follow the advice of the National Fire Protection Association about how to use them safely; <http://www.nfpa.org/safety-information/for-consumers/causes/heating/heating-safety-tips>. You can heat your home with fireplaces, propane or kerosene heaters, or wood stoves. Make sure that they are properly vented and have a battery-operated carbon monoxide (CO) in the room. CO poisoning can result from the use of improperly vented heating equipment or vents that are clogged or leaky. This includes cracked or blocked chimneys. You cannot see or smell CO. Hypothermia and CO poisoning are both sneaky and deadly. The fumes may be fatal before anyone realizes there's a problem. If you suspect you've been exposed to carbon monoxide, get into fresh air immediately and seek emergency medical care. If possible, open windows and doors on the way out of the house. The two main threats you will face during a winter storm power failure are the cold and the possibility of carbon monoxide poisoning. Become familiar with the symptoms of both and seek medical attention as quickly as possible if you notice the symptoms of either condition.

Be Aware of Dangerous Symptoms

Do not let hypothermia sneak up on you. Be aware of the symptoms of mild and, severe hypothermia, and hypothermia in infants. A list of these symptoms and further information about hypothermia can be found on the Health Canada website, <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/iyh-vsv/environ/cold-extreme-froid-eng.php>

Guard against carbon monoxide poisoning by being on watch for its symptoms. You can find a list of symptoms and additional information about carbon monoxide poisoning at the Health Canada website, <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/ewh-semt/air/in/poll/combustion/carbon-eng.php>