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## Week 40 of 52: Cold Weather Preparedness

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In a previous newsletters we discussed in depth the nightmare we would experience during a prolonged or long-term [power disruption](#) <sup>[1]</sup>. Taking this a step further, what would happen if this event occurred in the dead of winter? This is a serious threat for those who see frigid cold weather temperatures during the winter? In this case, it will be up to you to keep yourself and your family warm until the grid comes back up or until Spring arrives.

In an [article](#) <sup>[2]</sup> written by the talented Sarah Duncan, she discusses this very issue and adds that, "Our society has become so certain that the grid is permanent that many homes built over the past 50-60 years have been designed without the vital elements of a fireplace or a wood stove for heat." In the newer homes, most of the fireplaces are present for aesthetic reasons rather than practicality. For this reason, we must prepare accordingly in order to stay warm.

Exposure to cold for long periods of time can be caustic to the body tissues. When the cold hits the body and your core temperature drops, your body will kick into survival mode by cutting off circulation to the outer extremities first (like when a lizard detaches its tail). The fingers, toes, nose, ears, and lips are the first places your body ceases to keep alive when faced with death by freezing. These are the first parts of the body to show signs of frostbite. Keep in mind that you can develop hypothermia with temperatures above freezing. The fastest way to become hypothermic is a combination of cold temperatures with wind and rain. In this case, your body loses heat *25 times faster* than it would by just being out in the cold.

Older individuals and small children are at the greatest risk of hypothermia. Diabetics and those who suffer from low thyroid levels are also more at risk. However, anyone who is subjected to the elements long enough will surely be effected. Learn about the [signs of hypothermia and how to treat it](#) <sup>[3]</sup>.

Let's begin discussing some solutions and practical ways to prevent this. Having some space heaters on hand will be a Godsend when temperatures start dropping rapidly. Propane heaters, such as the [Little Buddy heater](#) <sup>[4]</sup> can provide a room with ample heat and are considered safe for indoor use in most states. There are several propane heaters on the market that do not require electricity. Kerosene/Oil heaters are also beneficial to have during cold months. These heaters burn a wick for heat, fuelled by the addition of heating oil. An antique "[Perfection](#)" <sup>[5]</sup> oil heater can be a charming addition to your decor that can be called into service during a grid-down situation. Click [here](#) <sup>[6]</sup> to read more information about the different types of kerosene heaters that are available.

Every preparedness layer makes a difference in the case of surviving the winter in a grid-down situation. We can make the most of a dire situation by insulating the body and insulating the home. Aside from the obvious ways to stay warm, consider the following:

### Insulating the Body

- A large majority of body heat is lost at the back of the neck and at the top of the head, so make sure that you use the [layering principle](#) <sup>[7]</sup> with your clothing. Ensure you have a warm hat to wear and to make sure your chest and neck are covered with a scarf. Lightweight gloves will also help you maintain your warmth. Wear heavy socks and shoes to protect your feet from cold floors.

- Hand warmers and foot warmers are a great way to increase your core body temperature quickly. [Click here](#) <sup>[8]</sup> to learn how to make a pocket for these warmers to prevent scalding to the skin.
- Use heavy sleeping bags. Zipping into a sleeping bag will conserve your body's warmth more than simply getting under the covers.
- [Bivvy sacks](#) <sup>[9]</sup> are ideal for adding an extra layer to your sleeping bags for added warmth.
- Crumpling up newspapers and putting them in your clothing will provide some extra warmth as well.
- Pitch a tent. This works especially well when you have children because it adds an element of fun to an otherwise stressful situation. Inside a tent, you can combine your body heat to stay much warmer.

### Insulating the Home

- Light some candles. Burning candles can add some much needed warmth to a small area. And if you want to make the most of heat emitted from a candle, try making a [space heater from a candle](#) <sup>[10]</sup>. This handy device collects, retains, concentrates, and radiates dry space heat from a candle.
- Sealing off a room or a smaller area to heat by using a folded quilt at the bottom to better insulate the room. You can also hang heavy quilts in the doorways of rooms with a heat source to block them off from the rest of the house. Ensure that you seal any drafts coming from windows in the room as well.
- To prevent heat from escaping from the fireplace when it's not in use purchase a [Fireplace plug](#) <sup>[11]</sup>. It is an inflatable pillow that seals the fireplace damper, eliminating drafts, odors, and noise. The pillow is removed whenever the fireplace is used, then reinserted after.
- Insulate your windows. Rubber weather sealant and/or window insulation film can also keep drafts at a minimum.  
You can also use a plastic shower curtain or [bubble wrap](#) <sup>[12]</sup> and duct tape, topped by a heavy quilt to keep the wind from whistling through your windows. This has the added benefit of keeping the windows dark if you are concerned about [OPSEC](#) <sup>[13]</sup> (Operational Security). Another option is to purchase a draft door dodger or make your own. (The instructions for this are in the "Stats and Facts" section of this newsletter.) Layers of curtains made of heavy fabrics can also keep a room more insulated.
- Here's a way to convert your windows into [passive solar heater](#) <sup>[14]</sup>. This [passive solar heater](#) <sup>[15]</sup> is very simple and can be made with items already in your house. If you want to read more about designing and building a solar heater for your home, here is a great article on [Mother Earth News](#) <sup>[16]</sup>.
- Heat some rocks. If you have a place outdoors for a cooking fire, you can add large rocks to the fire. Rocks retain heat for a very long time. When you are ready to go to bed, move the rocks into a cast iron Dutch oven. VERY CAREFULLY take this into the room that you are heating. The stones will emit heat for several hours. This is an excellent way to passively heat your room when you're sleeping. With this method, you don't have to be concerned about the potential of a fire or carbon monoxide poisoning during the night.

In your search for warmth make certain that you also maintain safety. Keep fire extinguishers handy and invest in a battery operated carbon monoxide detector. Keep children and pets away from items that could burn them or that could tip over, causing a fire. Be sure to store all flammable materials (such as propane and kerosene) according to manufacturer's instructions.

Did you know that snow is an excellent insulator (provided you don't touch it)? For those of you who may find themselves outdoors and exposed to the cold elements, knowing how to make an [emergency winter shelter](#) <sup>[17]</sup> out of snow could save your life.

### Preps to Buy:

- Space heater (preferably propane or non-electric)

- Door draft stopper or windows and doors
- Sleeping bag
- Bivvy sac
- Wool socks
- Thermal underwear
- Hand and foot warmers
- Rubber weather sealant
- Caulk
- Window insulation film
- Bubble wrap or an old shower curtain set aside
- Duct tape
- Fireplace plug

## Action Items:

Winterize your home before bad weather is expected:

1. Check your furnace and replace filters monthly.
2. Inspect the fireplace and get it ready for use. Ensure your firewood is properly seasoned, and stored away from the home.
3. Insulate your exterior pipes.
4. Inspect exterior of home and seal any crevice cracks and exposed entry points around pipes.
5. Caulk and weather-strip doors and windows.
6. Add insulation to your walls and attic, if necessary.
7. Consider purchasing insulated doors and storm windows to further protect your home from the cold. This will also help lower your heating bill.
8. Replace cracked glass in windows. If is necessary to replace the entire window, be sure to prime and paint exposed wood.
9. If your home has a basement, consider protecting its window wells by covering them with plastic shields.
10. Inspect roof, gutters & downspouts and clean out any debris.

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URLs in this post:

[1] power disruption: [http://readynutrition.com/resources/when-the-grid-goes-down-you-better-be-ready\\_10022012/](http://readynutrition.com/resources/when-the-grid-goes-down-you-better-be-ready_10022012/)

[2] article: [http://readynutrition.com/resources/winter-warmth-when-the-grid-is-down\\_04042012/](http://readynutrition.com/resources/winter-warmth-when-the-grid-is-down_04042012/)

[3] signs of hypothermia and how to treat it: [http://readynutrition.com/resources/cold-exposure-emergencies-and-how-to-avoid-it\\_04022012/](http://readynutrition.com/resources/cold-exposure-emergencies-and-how-to-avoid-it_04022012/)

[4] Little Buddy heater: <http://www.mrheater.com/ProductFamily.aspx?catid=41>

[5] Perfection: [http://www.milesstair.com/Perfection\\_History.htm](http://www.milesstair.com/Perfection_History.htm)

[6] here: [http://www.endtimesreport.com/kerosene\\_heaters.html](http://www.endtimesreport.com/kerosene_heaters.html)

[7] layering principle: [http://readynutrition.com/resources/are-you-ready-series-emergency-clothing-part-3\\_27112009/](http://readynutrition.com/resources/are-you-ready-series-emergency-clothing-part-3_27112009/)

[8] Click here: [http://readynutrition.com/resources/fight-the-coldhomemade-pocket-warmers\\_25012011/](http://readynutrition.com/resources/fight-the-coldhomemade-pocket-warmers_25012011/)

[9] Bivvy sacks: [http://readynutrition.com/resources/essential-emergency-preps-thermo-lite-2-0-bivvy-bag\\_16052011/](http://readynutrition.com/resources/essential-emergency-preps-thermo-lite-2-0-bivvy-bag_16052011/)

[10] space heater from a candle: [http://www.heatstick.com/\\_Process.htm](http://www.heatstick.com/_Process.htm)

- [11] Fireplace plug: <http://www.amazon.com/Fireplace-Chimney-Draftstopper-Balloon-Pillow/dp/B0001HA8MC>
- [12] bubble wrap: <http://builditsolar.com/Projects/Conservation/bubblewrap.htm>
- [13] OPSEC: [http://readynutrition.com/resources/mums-the-word-using-opsec-with-preps\\_21032010/](http://readynutrition.com/resources/mums-the-word-using-opsec-with-preps_21032010/)
- [14] passive solar heater: <http://www.instructables.com/id/Solar-Heater/>
- [15] passive solar heater:  
<http://omegamanjournal.wordpress.com/2012/04/02/passive-solar-heater/>
- [16] Mother Earth News: <http://www.motherearthnews.com/Renewable-Energy/2006-12-01/Build-a-Simple-Solar-Heater.aspx>
- [17] emergency winter shelter: <http://www.survivalmagazine.org/survival-forum/showthread.php/6330-Winter-Shelter-Quinzhee-Tutorial>

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