

Totally Ready

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Stranded During Winter Weather

By Carolyn Nicolaysen

November 27, 2018

Author's note: I have received several messages asking how to help the survivors of the Camp Fire in Paradise, California. I will be getting more information this week. Please understand organizations such as the Red Cross only provide immediate relief. This crisis will last for years as churches, schools, businesses, and homes all need to be rebuilt. At this moment 14,000 homes have been lost. If you would like to help please contact me. Thank you.

On October 3, 2018 hundreds of motorists in Canada were stranded in a snow storm for more than 10 hours. One motorist said, "Couldn't book a room if our lives depended on it, and it kind of does, it's freezing out here." Another motorist said, "If it were -20C (-4 F) right now, people would be dead". Every year people die because they are unprepared with the knowledge needed to survive for hours or days in freezing conditions.

None of us plan to get in trouble, but for the unfortunate or careless, trouble finds them anyway. A student driving home for Christmas at the end of Fall semester takes a wrong turn and ends up stranded on a dark freezing night. Or, a family who cannot leave for Grandma's house until Christmas Eve heads out into a snowstorm with the kids in the back seat, and no special preparation. Does this sound like you, or someone you care about?

Take time now for serious thought about what you will do if caught stranded, stopped in extensive traffic delays, spun out and stuck in a snowbank, or just out of gas on a cold and lonely road.

You have accepted the fact you are stuck and it is getting cold in your car. Now what?

1. Prepare to stay in your car.
2. Assess the situation and begin to prepare everything needed to stay warm. Staying warm is your number one concern, everything else can wait.
3. Put on clothing. Begin layering the clothing you have. If you only have the coat you are wearing begin "stuffing". Place newspaper, a towel, pillow, body warmer from your auto kit, what ever will insulate, under your coat and then zip up. Your core must stay warm for you to remain healthy and safe.

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4. If you are traveling with luggage pull out some clothing and layer. Layers of clothes should be loose fitting to trap the air between the layers creating more insulation.
5. Put on scarves and hats. Much of heat loss is thru your head and feet.
6. Put on gloves. If you have more than one pair put on both. If you do not have gloves and mittens put on the work gloves from your auto kit. Remember mittens are warmer than gloves. If you have both put on the gloves and then mittens on top.
7. Double up socks. If you do not have a second pair of socks use plastic grocery bags or cut a mylar blanket and place over your socks before returning your foot to your shoes or boots. Do you remember moon boots? They were so warm and worked on this principle, the boot, a plastic liner and then the fabric liner.
8. Now that you are bundled up go outside and make sure the tailpipe is clear. You never want to run the car if the tailpipe is blocked by snow or debris.
9. While outside gather any items in the trunk that can be of use.
10. Returning to the car it is time to prepare to hunker down. Open a window a small bit to allow circulation.
11. Set timer on your phone and run the engine every hour for ten minutes. This will keep the car from becoming a freezer.
12. When you run the car be sure to charge your cell phone.
13. Create a tent within the car. Remember placing a blanket over a table and playing inside? When you create a smaller space your body heat will help to warm the area. Arrange a mylar blanket, tarp, or blanket on the back of the seat and the other end of the blanket etc. over the headrest of the front seats. Now you can curl up in your "tent".

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14. Mylar emergency blankets have dozens of uses from creating warmth to blocking wind, or to use as a signaling device. Mylar blankets can be used for:
 - Warmth. Using duct tape, tape three sides together and create a sleeping bag for a child. For an adult, tape two blankets together.
 - Insulation from the cold. When stranded, cover the walls inside the vehicle with the blanket, with the shiny side facing inward. This will help retain your body heat warming the air.
 - Moisture barrier. Cut a slit in the center big enough to fit your head through and use it as a poncho.
 - Signaling device. If stranded in the snow, place a mylar blanket over the roof of the car. This will make it easier for rescuers to see the car, especially if the car is a light color. Be sure to occasionally remove snow.

15. Block the cold from seeping in. Cover the windows and door handles with newspaper or fabric such as extra clothing. Sun shades placed in the front or rear window also works well for this. Cold does come in thru the glass and small openings around the handle.

16. Use your paint can heater outside of the car to heat rocks. Use the rocks as you would an old fashioned bed pan. Wrap in clothing or paper grocery bag to protect your skin. Be aware the rocks may ruin any clothing used but they may also save your life. Directions to make the heaters can be found at the [Totally Ready facebook page](#).

17. Cover the floor. Years ago I was on a camping trip training as a camp counselor when a thunder storm came up. My tent mate and I spent the night in our tent but others went to their cars to sleep. They froze, we did not. Cold air circulated under the car causing it to become very cold inside. It was summer so you can imagine how much worse it would have been in winter. Use magazines, newspaper, suitcases and their contents, carpet from the trunk, whatever you can to cover the floor of the car.

18. Light a tea light, be sure to place tea light in a non-flammable container. This small candle will help keep the car warmer.

19. Time to eat and drink. You burn many more calories when you are cold and your body is trying to maintain core temperature. If you do not have water do not eat

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snow instead without melting. Use your paint can heater or tuna can heater and your # ten can to melt snow. If you can not start a fire melt snow in a heat proof container by placing it on the engine when you run the car.

20. Create a signal for rescuers. See Meridian article: [Basic Survival Skills: Signaling](#).
21. Do not go to sleep if possible. If you are alone set your timer to wake you in time to run the car engine each hour. When you awaken be sure to check around the car to determine all is still safe. Sleeping may mean you miss signaling those searching for you, but you can't stay awake forever.
22. Bundle up in blankets or sleeping bag.
23. Cover your nose. The fingers, ears, feet, and nose will become victim to frostbite quickly.
24. Use your glow sticks at night as a signal to rescuers and also so you can see to rearrange items and turn the car on each hour.
25. Snuggle. If it is just you and a passenger move to the back seat so you can sit close and share a blanket.

Take a few minutes to review these steps with your family and place a copy in each auto emergency kit.

Carolyn is asking for ideas for 2019. Please visit her [facebook page](#) or contact her thru Meridian Magazine to let her know how she can help you overcome your stumbling blocks to being Totally Ready.