

Newsletter issue 37 -September 2012

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**FORWARD**  
**MIDLOTHIAN**  
**DISABLED PEOPLE**



*Equality - Diversity - Inclusion*

## Winter Newsletter 2012

# Are you ready for winter?

This year disabled people across Scotland are being encouraged to get ready for winter. Getting ready for winter is something we all need to do – it only takes a few simple steps. It's time to start thinking about how you could be affected by severe weather, and what you need to do now to be better prepared.

Whether it's at home, in the community or behind the wheel we all need to consider what might help.

By thinking about how we can all be ready, we can help Midlothian be better prepared.

Recent severe weather caught many people out.

This special newsletter contains some good advice and tips to prepare us for this winter. Some useful 'phone numbers are included. As part of your 'My Winter Plan', write down your important contact numbers now and keep them by your 'phone. We have included many sources of support. Please take time to read through them and make sure you have thought about the things that will make this winter manageable, safe and enjoyable!

Make sure you will be able to have your footpaths and driveway cleared if severe weather strikes. It is a good idea to keep a shovel (specially designed snow shovels are particularly good) and some salt or grit at home. Remember to find out where your nearest local authority grit bin is located.

Information about local services is kept up-to-date on Midlothian Council's website ([www.midlothian.gov.uk](http://www.midlothian.gov.uk)), so it's important to check for the latest information and advice during severe weather. Keeping tuned to local radio stations such as Black Diamond and Forth FM will also



provide advice and updates during bad weather.

## **Emergency helpline for severe weather conditions**

Midlothian Council's Social Work team will run an emergency helpline which is activated and publicised if severe weather arrives. This is for elderly, disabled and vulnerable people without other means of support – for example where carers or family members are unavailable.

The helpline can assist if someone is running out of their prescription medication and/or basic groceries like milk and bread. Midlothian Council works in partnership with the British Red Cross so they can arrange for a volunteer to pick up and deliver an emergency prescription or supplies to your home.

It is important that everyone keeps in contact with any friends and neighbours who might require assistance during periods of severe weather. Older people particularly value the information and support they receive from neighbours during these times. Someone they know popping round can help to reduce feelings of loneliness and isolation.

If you would like to help any elderly or vulnerable people in your area, you could contact your local community council.

If the weather is bad, you (or someone you know) might be concerned about transport or whether a Midlothian Council facility has had to close. For up-to-date information during severe weather, visit [www.midlothian.gov.uk](http://www.midlothian.gov.uk) or call the contact centre on 0131 663 7211.

In an emergency, the Social Work Department can be contacted on 0800 731 6969 (out of normal office hours).

Other key 'phone numbers in Midlothian



Emergency Services	999
Midlothian Community Hospital	0131 454 1001
Refuse/Wheelie Bins	0131 561 5284
Midlothian Travel Team	0131 561 5443
Dial-a-Bus Midlothian	0131 447 9949
Dial-a-Ride Midlothian	0131 447 9949
Midlothian Social Work Services Loanhead	0131 271 3900
Carers VOCAL Midlothian	0131 663 6869
Citizens Advice Bureau Dalkeith	0131 660 1636
Midcare (Telecare) Midlothian	0131 271 3900
NHS24	08454 24 24 24
British Red Cross	0131 654 0340
Lothian Centre for Inclusive Living	0131 475 2350
Midlothian Council – Housing Benefits	0131 271 3201
Midlothian Council – Direct Payments	0131 271 3900

## My important 'phone numbers

Write down the names and 'phone numbers of people you may need to contact during a period of bad weather and keep this list next to your telephone.

Emergency Services	999
Midlothian Council	0131 270 7500
NHS24	08454 24 24 24
Lothian Buses	0131 554 4494
My plumber	
My doctor	

## Emergency kit (things I may need during bad weather)

Although not exhaustive, here is a list of items you may wish to consider storing in case of bad weather when you may not be able to leave your home. It is also worth considering supplies you may need in case of a power cut.

- ☺ Drinking water
- ☺ Canned/no-cook food (bread, crackers, dried fruits)
- ☺ Non-electric can opener
- ☺ Prescription drugs and other medicine
- ☺ First-aid kit
- ☺ Rock-salt to melt ice on walkways
- ☺ Supply of cat litter or bag of sand to add traction on walkways
- ☺ Flashlight and extra batteries
- ☺ Battery-powered lamps or lanterns (To prevent the risk of fire, avoid using candles.)
- ☺ Battery-powered radio
- ☺ Fully charged mobile 'phone
- ☺ Any pet food required
- ☺ Blankets and extra clothes should your heating not work
- ☺ Juice and enhanced waters in boxes and plastic bottles
- ☺ Long life or powdered milk
- ☺ Books and magazines
- ☺ Crosswords and puzzles
- ☺ Emergency contact list (printed on the back of this page)



## Preparing for winter

Getting ready for winter at home is easy. Just make a household plan and collect together the items for an emergency kit that may be essential for you and your family (see previous page).

It is time to think about winter-proofing your home. Do you know what action to take if a water pipe bursts? Do you know where your stop valve is and how to turn it off? Do you know how to turn your electricity supply off at the mains?



If cold weather is forecast, and during a cold snap, keep your heating on at a low temperature to help prevent pipes from freezing.

Making your home energy efficient will make it cheaper and quicker to heat during cold weather. For further information, please call the Scottish Government's Home Energy Scotland Helpline on 0800 512 012.

Remember to check the terms of your household insurance policies to find out what cover you have for risks such as flood or storm damage or for the costs of temporary accommodation if your home is not habitable. Consider taking out insurance if you don't currently have any.

It is also important to not only prepare your home, but to prepare your body for winter! Preventative measures can be taken to avoid colds and 'flu. People aged over 65 years or those who have a medical condition can check with their local medical practice to get advice on a seasonal 'flu vaccination.

Keep a supply of remedies at home. Paracetamol, ibuprofen or aspirin all help to reduce raised temperatures and relieve the aches and pains associated with coughs, colds and 'flu. Many cold and 'flu remedies already contain paracetamol, ibuprofen or aspirin. Using several products together can be very dangerous and can lead to an overdose. Products are labelled to indicate their contents, so always check before using them. If you do have a cough, cold or 'flu, drink plenty of water or other non-alcoholic liquids to replace the fluids lost after sweating. Keep warm and rest as much as you can.

It is best to periodically check that the medicines in your home are up-to-date. This is why it is important to keep them in their original containers. Always follow the instructions on the box or label. If you are unsure about taking any medicines, consult with your doctor or pharmacist first. To combat the cold, layers of thin clothing are far more effective than one thick layer. Choose clothes made of wool, cotton or fleecy synthetic fibres. Remember to wear a hat when outdoors and ensure you wear footwear with a good grip.

During the holiday season, most GP practices will be closed on the 25th and 26th December and 1st and 2nd January.

Most pharmacies will also be closed during the holidays. Please refer to the NHS24 website [www.nhs.24.com](http://www.nhs.24.com) for opening times.

Remember to order and collect any repeat prescriptions you may require in sufficient time prior

to the holidays.

Hospital Accident and Emergency services (A&E) are for emergency and urgent situations only. A&E is not an alternative to GPs. Please don't go to A&E if your doctor can't see you immediately or when your surgery is closed.

## **Winter in the community**

Some family members or neighbours may need extra help during bad weather. Have their 'phone numbers to hand, and offer to help with grocery shopping or other essential tasks.

If you feel alone during a patch of bad weather, equip yourself with a few useful contact numbers: a neighbour who can help, the local minister, or your local community council.

Clearing ice or snow from your pathway reduces the risk of falling or slipping. Remember for some people ice can make things as difficult as deep snow.

Your community can get ready for winter by agreeing what you and your neighbours can do on your own or collectively to minimise the effects of winter weather.

Midlothian Council will do all they can to keep essential services running during periods of severe weather. However severe weather may cause some changes to routine local services such as the temporary closure of schools, changes to the times of refuse collection and a greater emphasis on gritting and route clearance.

Alternative publications This newsletter can be provided in alternative formats. Please contact Eric Johnstone on 0131 663 9471 or by email on [eric.johnstone@mvacvs.org.uk](mailto:eric.johnstone@mvacvs.org.uk) for further details.

## **Are you ready for winter?**

A message from Midlothian Council: Once again, the emphasis this year is on working with communities in severe weather. Published on 30 November 2012

While we rely on local residents to, if possible, keep roads and pavements outside their home free of snow and ice, we will be out clearing priority roads first. These are, for example, main bus routes and roads to hospitals.

We also have robust procedures in place to look after vulnerable people in the event of snow and freezing weather.

We will work closely with agencies including NHS Lothian, the voluntary sector and the emergency services to make sure those in greatest need are cared for.

For example, working with the voluntary sector, we can organise practical help and support, including shopping and collecting prescriptions, for many elderly people living alone.

We also make sure places such as care homes get the necessary access they need to goods and services and we liaise with the NHS to support patients being discharged from hospitals who may need extra support.

Council Leader, Councillor Bob Constable, said: "Two years ago when the snow was particularly bad our staff continued to provide an often exceptional service during very difficult conditions." "For example, many were walking far distances to make sure elderly clients got the help they

needed at home.”

"Meanwhile, the roads team was committed to doing its bit by keeping the county's main roads open."

Cllr Constable said he was confident all the necessary measures are in place to cope whatever the weather throws at us. For example, we have around 6,800 tons of salt in stock and a budget of £1,048,000 set aside for winter services.

Cllr Constable added: "But we need residents help too."

## **Keeping affordably warm this winter**

Energy prices keep rising and many people will struggle this winter living in a cold home or will get into fuel debt.

There is help out there to support people who are struggling to keep their home warm: to identify if someone needs help ask these four key questions:

- Is your home cold?
- Is your home damp?
- Is your home draughty?
- Are you concerned about affording energy in your home?

If the answer is 'yes' to any of these, what next?

Support is available through:

1) the Scottish Government's Energy Assistance Package. Just ring the Energy Saving Scotland advice centre on 0800 512 012 for more information.

2) Changeworks' Affordable Warmth Team provide outreach support to people who struggle with heating costs, gas or electricity debt, or with staying warm, dry and comfortable in their home. We can help people get the most out of their heating and hot water system, resolve fuel billing problems, help negotiate with suppliers, access energy efficiency grants and give advice on choosing a suitable gas/electricity tariff. We can support people living in Midlothian, Edinburgh and East Lothian, and can visit people at home.

If you would like to contact one of our advisors: - email [warmth@changeworks.org.uk](mailto:warmth@changeworks.org.uk)

- fill in our online referral form on our website: [www.changeworks.org.uk/householders/free-energy-advice-referral-form/569/](http://www.changeworks.org.uk/householders/free-energy-advice-referral-form/569/)

- or call 0800 512 012 and ask for the Affordable Warmth Outreach Team.

## **Midlothian Roads**

Midlothian Council, as part of its Winter Service Policy and Operational Plan has agreed the following Policy Service Standards:

1. Keep agreed priority route and main bus routes free from snow and ice as far as reasonably practicable as a priority.
2. Clear agreed road and footway 'Access Routes' to all schools and education establishments within Midlothian during periods of snow.
3. Support facilities management staff within school grounds during periods of prolonged snow conditions, as required and as resources are available.
4. Support social/care centres in clearing pedestrian access routes in and around facilities.
5. Maintain waste collection services as far as possible, set up local collection points when and if conditions allow.

6. Support NHS facilities with hand crews to clear footways and pedestrian access areas.
7. Support local community groups by providing bulk bags of salt/grit at pre agreed locations during periods of prolonged snow conditions.

Some essentials for your car

Here are some simple things you should keep in your car, in case the weather turns nasty:

- ☺ a blanket
- ☺ warm winter clothing (including boots)
- ☺ ice scraper and de-icer
- ☺ battery jump leads
- ☺ map for any unplanned diversions
- ☺ a first-aid kit
- ☺ a torch and spare batteries
- ☺ a mobile phone and charger
- ☺ a shovel for snow
- ☺ food and drink that will last (and a warm drink in a flask before each journey)

## **Driving through ice and snow**

your stopping distance increases ten times when driving in snow and ice

- ☺ select second gear when pulling away, easing your foot off the clutch gently to avoid wheel-spin
- ☺ it's not always obvious that the road's icy – look for clues like ice on the pavement or on your windscreen
- ☺ don't brake too hard – it'll just lock up your wheels and make you skid further
- ☺ clear any snow on the roof of the vehicle before you drive off, as it can slip down over the windscreen and obscure your view
- ☺ look out for winter service vehicles spreading salt or using snow ploughs.



## **Some good sources of up to date communication if it snows!**

### **Social Media**

Midlothian Council: Website: <http://www.midlothian.gov.uk/>

Twitter: <http://twitter.com/#!/midgov>

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/MidlothianCouncil>



### **Midlothian Voluntary Action**

Website: <http://www.mvacvs.org.uk/>

Twitter: <http://twitter.com/#!/MVACommunity>

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/MidlothianVoluntaryAction>

Blog: <http://mvacvs.com/>

### **Other Essential Contacts**

For all other essential contact details see the Ready Scotland website:  
<http://www.readyscotland.org/are-you-ready/winter-weather/essential-contacts/>

Lothian Region Transport Website: <http://lothianbuses.com/>

Twitter: [http://twitter.com/#!/ON\\_LOTHIANBUSES](http://twitter.com/#!/ON_LOTHIANBUSES)

(a good site to check if you have a Smartphone and want to know if the bus you are waiting on has got stuck in snow!)

#### **Alternative Publications**

The editions of the Forward MID newsletters are available in large print or at [www.forwardmid.org.uk](http://www.forwardmid.org.uk)  
For alternative publication please E-mail to [eric.johnstone@mvacvs.org.uk](mailto:eric.johnstone@mvacvs.org.uk) or call Eric Johnstone on 0131-663-9471 or write to him at MVA 4-6 White Hart Street, Dalkeith EH22 1AE with your request.