

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



*Equality - Diversity - Inclusion*

## Preparing Yourself for Winter 2013 in Midlothian

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.

Previous 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. Stay tuned to local radio stations such as Black Diamond and Forth FM as they also provide advice and updates during bad weather. Here are some recommended items to keep in your car over winter:

- ☺ A blanket;
- ☺ Warm winter clothing (including boots);
- ☺ Ice scraper and de-icer;
- ☺ Battery jump leads;
- ☺ A 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).

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## 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 7500/663 7211
NHS.24	08454 24 24 24
Lothian Buses	0131 554 4494
My plumber	
My doctor	

## 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 5445
Dial-a-Bus Midlothian	0131 447 1718
Dial-a-Ride Midlothian	0131 447 9949
Midlothian Social Work Services	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

## 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.



## 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 NHS.24 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 G.P.s. Please don't go to A&E if your doctor can't see you immediately or when your surgery is closed.

## **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:

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



## Cold Weather Payment/Sign Up

With a squeeze being applied at every turn to disabled people, we will have to use every measure to reduce out-going money.

Cold Weather Payments are made by the Government to households in receipt of qualifying benefits during periods of cold weather. These payments are to help with the extra heating costs if the average temperature where you live is recorded as 0°C or below for seven days in a row. Eligible households will get £25 for each seven day period between 1 November and 31 March, paid in the same way as their normal benefits. To qualify for cold weather payments you will:

- \* Have a child living with you who was born on or after 01 April 2008;
- \* Receive Incapacity Benefit or Severe Disablement Allowance;
- \* Receive Disability Living Allowance or you receive Disability Living Allowance on behalf of a child living with you;
- \* Receive War Disablement Pension;
- \* Receive Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit;
- \* Receive an additional payment (such as the work-related activity group or support; component of Employment and Support Allowance) because of sickness or disability.

You will be required to contact your energy provider and complete the registration form :

[britishgaswarmhomediscount.com](http://britishgaswarmhomediscount.com) or 0800 072 8625

[www.edfenergyonline.co.uk/supportplus/form.html](http://www.edfenergyonline.co.uk/supportplus/form.html) or call 0800 015 0960

[www.eonenergy.com/for-your-home/saving-energy/need-little-extra-help/warm-home-discount/warm-home-discount-form](http://www.eonenergy.com/for-your-home/saving-energy/need-little-extra-help/warm-home-discount/warm-home-discount-form) or call 0843 506 9877

[www.npowerwarmhomediscount.com/](http://www.npowerwarmhomediscount.com/) or call 0808 172 6999

[www.southern-electric.co.uk/HelpAndAdvice/ExtraHelp/PriorityPlan/](http://www.southern-electric.co.uk/HelpAndAdvice/ExtraHelp/PriorityPlan/) or 0800 300 111

Scottish Power 0800 027 0072

Scottish Power has made a Winter Commitment:

No upper limit on the number of customers who can receive the Warm Home Discount Broader Group Rebate;

A written estimated saving quote sent to all quarterly credit customers;

Free insulation and heating measures for qualifying customers;

A winter debt recovery break for their most vulnerable prepayment customers.

### And No Winter Disconnections!

## 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 their home cold?
- ❖ Is their home damp?
- ❖ Is their home draughty?
- ❖ Are they concerned about affording energy in their 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.

They 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. They can support people living in Midlothian, Edinburgh and East Lothian. They can also visit people at home.

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

- Fill in their online referral form on their 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.

## **Some Good Sources of up-to-date Communication if it Snows!**

### **Social Media**

Midlothian Council: Website: [www.midlothian.gov.uk/](http://www.midlothian.gov.uk/)

Twitter: [twitter.com/#!/midgov](https://twitter.com/#!/midgov)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/MidlothianCouncil](http://www.facebook.com/MidlothianCouncil)



### **Midlothian Voluntary Action**

Website: [www.mvacvs.org.uk/](http://www.mvacvs.org.uk/)

Twitter: [twitter.com/MVACommunity](https://twitter.com/MVACommunity) or [@MVACommunity](https://twitter.com/MVACommunity)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/MidlothianVoluntaryAction](http://www.facebook.com/MidlothianVoluntaryAction)



### **Other Essential Contacts**

For all other essential contact details see the Ready Scotland website:

[www.readyscotland.org/are-you-ready/winter-weather/essential-contacts/](http://www.readyscotland.org/are-you-ready/winter-weather/essential-contacts/)

Lothian Buses website: [www.lothianbuses.com](http://www.lothianbuses.com)

Twitter: [twitter.com/on\\_lothianbuses](https://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!)

## **A message From Midlothian Council**

Once again, the emphasis this year is on Midlothian Council working with communities in severe weather.

Councillor Bob Constable, said: “Three 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 so elderly clients could get 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.

As a priority the Council clear main roads and pavements such as routes to schools and hospitals, before tackling, for example, roads to industrial estates. It is only then that gritting teams can get down residential streets. The Council has stockpiled more than 5,000 tons of grit

to keep Midlothian moving this year.

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

They simply can't get down all residential streets quickly in severe weather and rely on householders to, if possible, keep roads and pavements outside their home free of snow and ice.

"Most residents do a sterling job and we can't thank them enough but this year, if there's a neighbour who might need help then why not offer some? Of course everyone should take the necessary precautions to not let anyone in your house you don't know - but there's still plenty we can all do to help out this winter. Even just having a chat and checking that an elderly neighbour is okay can make a real difference if they've been stuck indoors feeling lonely."

Midlothian Council also has robust procedures in place to look after vulnerable people. By working closely with agencies including NHS Lothian, the voluntary sector and the emergency services, they make sure those in greatest need are cared for.

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

It also makes sure places like care homes get the necessary access they need to goods and services and it liaises with the NHS to support patients being discharged from hospitals who need extra support.

Useful council telephone numbers:

Housing Repairs: 0131 663 7211

Waste: 0131 561 5284

Recycling: 0845 130 2322

Feedback: 0131 561 5444

In very extreme weather, anyone who is vulnerable and needs help can telephone 0131 271 3233.



For more information on what the Council does in severe weather, visit [www.midlothian.gov.uk/severe-weather](http://www.midlothian.gov.uk/severe-weather)

## **Driving Through Ice and Snow**

Your stopping distance increases ten times when driving in snow and ice so:

- ☺ 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.

## **Clearing Paths and Driveways after Snow**

Be a good neighbour and clear paths of ice and snow during cold weather if you are able to do so. A helping hand with this can make all the difference for people who may be unable to clear their own paths or who need to use local paths to access services.

- \* It's much easier to clear fresh snow;
- \* Do not use hot water. This will melt the snow, but may well replace it with black ice increasing the risk of injury;

- \* Choose suitable clothing for the task, e.g. footwear that provides a good grip;
- \* Do not take unnecessary risks in the road. Traffic will find it difficult to stop quickly in icy conditions. When clearing snow and ice, wear visible clothing that helps traffic to see you;
- \* If shovelling snow, think about where you are going to put it so that it does not block people's paths or simply shift the problem elsewhere. Make sure it will not cause problems when it melts. Piling snow over gullies or drains may stop melting snow from draining away and allow it to refreeze;
- \* Clear a small path down the middle of the area to be cleared first, so you have a safe surface to walk on. You can then shovel from the centre to the sides;
- \* Spread some grit on the area you have cleared to prevent ice forming. If necessary, ordinary table salt or dishwasher salt will work, but avoid spreading on plants or grass;
- \* If there is no salt available, then a little sand or ash can be used. It will not have the same de-icing properties as salt but should offer grip under foot;
- \* Use the sun to your advantage. Removing the top layer of snow will allow the sun to melt any ice beneath, but you will need to cover any ice with salt to stop refreezing overnight;
- \* Salt can be washed away by further snowfalls or rain and then refreeze, leaving black ice. If this happens more salt should be used before temperatures reach freezing;
- \* Particular care and attention should be given to steps and steep slopes. Additional salt could be used in these areas to reduce the risk of slipping;
- \* Try to sweep up any excess grit, sand or other substances used come the thaw.

## **After the Snow Comes the Thaw**

After a period of severe winter weather, the thaw comes as a relief. But it has its own risks and challenges. You can prepare for these by taking some simple steps and keeping up to date on the current situation.

### **Burst Pipes**

Make sure you know where to locate the stop valve which controls the water supply entering your home. If you suspect you have a burst pipe, turn off the water supply immediately.

### **Icicles and excess snow on roofs**

If your property has large amounts of overhanging snow or large icicles, try to make anyone entering it aware of the risk (a simple note on your door may do the job). If you are confident that it is safe to do so, you should try to remove overhanging icicles that pose a threat on your own property - but ladders should not be used in icy conditions, nor should you hang out of windows to reach roof areas. It is important to let children know of the risks of falling icicles - and of the danger of throwing snow or any other objects onto (or at) icicles or snowy roofs.



### **Alternative Publications**

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

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