

Opinion: Winter's arrival means taking precautions

By Trista Cunningham

The foothills and Sierra regions are prone to winter storms, and the Capital Region Chapter of the American Red Cross urges residents to take steps now to stay safer when severe weather threatens.

“By preparing together for winter storms, we can make our families safer and our communities stronger,” Christy Woods, director of preparedness, said. “We can help you and your family create a disaster preparedness plan now, before our community is threatened by dangerously low temperatures, snow, ice and strong winds.”

As with any disaster, preparation can be the difference between life and death. The Red Cross recommends that individuals and families prepare for winter storms by:

Assembling an emergency preparedness kit: Pack a winter-specific supply kit that includes a warm coat, hat, mittens or gloves, and water-resistant boots, along with extra blankets and extra warm clothing. Sand or non-clumping kitty litter is good to have on hand to help make walkways or steps less slippery. Additionally, make sure you have a first aid kit and essential medications, canned food and can opener, bottled water, flashlights and a battery-powered radio with extra batteries in your home in the event of a power outage.

Heeding storm warnings: A winter storm watch means winter storm conditions are possible within the next 36 to 48 hours. People in a watch area should review their winter storm plans and stay informed about weather conditions via NOAA weather radio, or local radio or television stations. A winter storm warning means that life-threatening, severe winter conditions

have begun or will begin within 24 hours. Individuals in a warning area should take precautions immediately.

Preparing your home and car: Winterize your vehicle and keep the gas tank full, which will help to keep the fuel line from freezing. Make sure your home is properly insulated by installing storm windows or covering windows with plastic from the inside to help keep cold air out. Maintain heating equipment and chimneys by having them cleaned and inspected every year.

For more information on winter storm preparedness, contact the Capital Region Chapter of the American Red Cross at (916) 993.7070. We urge you to share these Red Cross winter storm preparedness tips with every member of your household, because the best protection is to be prepared ahead of time.

Trista Cunningham works for the Red Cross.