

The Night Before a Blizzard

Ready by dark

What my mother had ready before the March 1966 blizzard, and what I do now. Most important first.

BEFORE THE ROAD CLOSES

- 1 ☐ **Fill your drinking jugs the night before, and bring the garage bucket in by the toilet.**
An electric well pump stops when the power does. A bucket of water poured in fast flushes the toilet. Melted snow is flush water, not drinking water.
- 2 ☐ **A crank weather radio with a tone alert, on the windowsill.**
Fresh batteries in it, and crank it now and then. The tone alert wakes you when a warning comes in.
- 3 ☐ **A toilet kit that needs no water, packed in one bucket tonight.**
Two kitchen trash bags, one inside the other, under the seat. A scoop of kitty litter in the inner bag. Hand wipes.
- 4 ☐ **A thermometer in the fridge, and another in the freezer.**
40°F or less in the fridge, 0°F or less in the freezer. Move what you won't eat this week into the freezer, packed close together.
- 5 ☐ **Call your pharmacy the day you hear a storm's coming.**
Ask about anything you'll need for the snowed-in week ahead. Put their number on your paper list.
- 6 ☐ **A week of your pet's food and water, set out before the road closes.**
Food, drinking water, bowls, litter if you have a cat, and a hand can opener. Bring him in when the wind turns bitter.
- 7 ☐ **Keep your gas tank at least half full, all winter long.**
A low tank in the cold can freeze up your gas line. Half a tank is your ride to town the day the plow comes through.
- 8 ☐ **A paper list of numbers on the wall by the door.**
Power company, road crew, fuel supplier, pharmacy and a neighbor. Write it big.
- 9 ☐ **A coffee-can car kit under the seat.**
A big can with a plastic lid: high-energy snacks, flashlight batteries, a red bandana for the antenna. An old blanket and spare mittens in the car too.
- 10 ☐ **A little cash at home, in small bills.**
Card readers and bank machines may not work when the power's out. Whatever amount suits you.

40°F

Fridge, or less

0°F

Freezer, or less

½ tank

Gas, all winter long

3 ftSnow across northern
Minnesota, March 1966

Power out on a well? Your pump stops too. Fill drinking jugs before the storm. If a septic system has its own pump, go easy on water until the power is back.