

# Portage Prepares

Helping Portage County Citizens prepare for emergencies and disasters.



Office of Homeland Security &  
Emergency Management

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**Board of County Commissioners**

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## Protect your pets from extreme cold weather

The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals warns that keeping pets inside, even if they're used to being outside, during the extreme cold is the best practice. The organization further suggests that pets should never be left alone in a car during extreme cold spells, that they should be thoroughly wiped down when coming in from the outside to both warm them and make sure no harmful materials tied to snow removal have clung to their coats and that dogs should not be let off the leash while walking them in a snowstorm as dogs can more easily lose their scent and become lost in winter conditions.

In addition, motorists should remember that stray cats often will climb up into engine compartments and under vehicles to try and stay warm and that it is a good idea to bang on the hood a few times before starting the car to scare them off.

## WINTER SAFETY

Help keep your pet safe during the colder months by following these simple guidelines:

- Don't leave pets outdoors when the temperature drops. Dogs and cats are safer indoors, except when taken out for supervised exercise. Regardless of the season, cats and shorthaired, very young, or old dogs should never be left outside. Short-coated dogs should wear a sweater during walks.

-Pets who spend time outdoors need more food in the winter because keeping warm depletes energy. If you keep a water bowl outside, routinely check to make certain the water is fresh and unfrozen. Use plastic food and water bowls rather than metal for any outside food or water bowls; when the temperature is low, your pet's tongue can stick and freeze to metal. Heated plastic pet water bowls are also an option to keep water from freezing when your pets must be outdoors.

-Warm engines in parked cars attract cats and small wildlife, who may crawl up under the hood. To avoid injuring any hidden animals, bang on your car's hood to scare them away before starting your engine.

-The salt and other chemicals used to melt snow and ice can irritate the pads of your pet's feet and may be harmful if ingested. Wipe their feet with a damp towel before your pet licks them to remove snow packed between your pet's paws. Pet-friendly ice melts are available at many pet supply stores across the nation or online.

-Traditional antifreeze is a deadly poison, but it has a sweet taste that can attract animals and children. Be certain that any antifreeze you buy or have put in your car contains a bittering agent that makes ingestion by pets and children less likely.

-No matter what the temperature, wind chill can threaten a pet's life. If your dog must spend significant time outdoors he/she must be protected by a dry, draft-free doghouse that is large enough to allow the dog to sit and lie down comfortably, but small enough to hold in his/her body heat. The floor should be raised a few inches off the ground and covered with cedar shavings or straw. The house should be turned to face away from the wind, and the doorway should be covered with waterproof burlap or heavy plastic.

