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How to stay warm in your car during extreme winter weather

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As if the last winter storm wasn't enough, Winter Storm Landon is making its way across the U.S. and is set to affect millions of Americans with its wintery, icy mess in the next couple of days. In some states like Texas, officials are already warning drivers to stay off the roads for any non-essential travel, with some areas shutting down portions of interstates to keep travel at an absolute minimum during these unsafe weather conditions.

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It's important to follow these orders and stay off the road when it's deemed too dangerous to travel. Even if you are in an area that isn't under any travel advisories, it's still crucial to stay vigilant when you travel, as a car accident or traffic jam can still get you stuck in cold winter weather. Take what happened in Virginia earlier this year, where hundreds of drivers found themselves stranded overnight on I-95 due to ice and snow from a winter storm.

If you happen to get stuck on the road, you don't want to find yourself without the essentials. That includes items to keep you warm when cold temperatures reach an unbearable (and, unsafe) low. Here are a few key ways you can stay warm in your car if you're stuck in the cold.

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1. Have thermal blankets ready to go

In the event that you need to spend a period of time in your car with the engine (and heat) off, you'll want something to keep you warm—especially if the temperature outside is dangerously low. Thermal blankets are great because you can store them in compact spaces like a glove box or a backpack.

These Swiss Safe emergency thermal blankets feature dual-sided aluminized mylar, which the brand says can help retain 90 percent of your body's heat. It can also block out rain and snow while you wait for help. Even better, this set has a 4.7-star rating on Amazon and nearly 9,000 positive reviews.

Get the Swiss Safe Emergency Mylar Thermal Blankets, Pack of 4 at Amazon for \$19.99

2. Stow wool blankets if you have the space

If you've got ample space in your car or SUV, consider having a couple of wool blankets as well. Wool is one of the warmest fabrics that can help to keep you insulated and preserve body heat.

This wool blanket sold on Amazon is 100% wool, meaning it'll keep you extra warm in comparison to other material blends. For a more budget-friendly blanket option, this similar military-style blanket is 80% wool for half the price. It's also made from fire retardant material if you ever wanted to break it out by a campfire or fire pit.

- **Get the Ektos 100% Wool Blanket from Amazon for \$50**
- **Get the Ever Ready First Aid Warm Wool Blanket from Amazon for \$24.99**

3. Store warm clothing in the car

An easy way to stay warm in your car is by bundling up in the winter gear you've already got. Along with making sure you've got your winter coat handy, use other accessories like your gloves, scarves and hats to bundle up when needed. The key to staying warm is by layering up, so you may even want to have a thermal long-sleeve shirt, leggings or long johns available.

This reviewer-loved infinity scarf features a cozy fleece lining that'll help to retain heat around your neck and head. As for gloves and socks that will keep your extremities warm, Amazon reviewers swear by these Carhartt insulated gloves which also happen to be waterproof and sweat-wicking. The Hot Feet Heated Thermal Sock is also a top-rated choice on Amazon for socks, with reviewers raving about just how soft and warm the socks feel.

- **Get the Men's Thermal Underwear Set from Amazon from \$25.98**
- **Get the Thermajane Women's Ultra Soft Long Johns Set from Amazon from \$33.78**
- **Get the Charlier Fleece Lined Infinity Scarf at Amazon for \$14.99**
- **Get the Carhartt Men's W.P. Waterproof Insulated Glove at Amazon from \$24.99**
- **Get the Carhartt Women's Quilts Insulated Glove from Amazon from \$22.99**
- **Get the Hot Feet Cozy Thermal Socks at Amazon for \$18.94**

4. Keep hand warmers in the glove box

Hand warmers are always a good idea in the wintertime, as they can help bring heat to those extremities that lose warmth the quickest. In case of an emergency, you can keep a few hand warmers in your car and shake them whenever you need to activate them.

You can buy a large pack of hand warmers for a decent price on Amazon, so you can keep a few at home, a few in your car or even a couple in a backpack or purse just in case.

Get the HotHands Long Lasting Air Activated Hand Warmers, Pack of 40 from Amazon for \$25.90

5. Keep an eye on your fuel

Ahead of your journey, try to *get gas when you can, not when you have to*. Though if you find yourself stuck in your car for more than a few hours and you start running low on fuel, you may want to get strategic about how you're using it.

Bockman's Auto Care recommends using gas sparingly if possible to prevent your car's battery from dying or running out of fuel. If the sun is out, try to take advantage of that warmth and see if you can go without running your car.

If you need to heat up your car, AAA says you should only run the engine and heater long enough to remove the chill. This will help to conserve fuel. While running your car, set your temperature controls to the warmest setting possible—when you turn your engine off, this warm air will be retained for a little while. Just be sure that your car's exhaust pipe isn't clogged with snow or any other obstruction, as this could lead to carbon monoxide gas leaking into the vehicle as the engine runs.

6. Install a heated car seat cushion

Before the next cold front comes to town, consider adding a heated cushion into your car to keep your body warm and toasty. While you might not be able to use it when the engine is off, you can use it for the brief periods of time that you have your engine running to heat up the rest of your car. Plus, it's a great addition to have for the rest of the winter season.

This heated cushion pad from Amazon has plenty of rave reviews, with customers saying it's easy to set up in your car and quickly heats up. For a battery-powered option that can work even when your engine isn't on, this rechargeable heated cushion —meant for use on cold stadium bleachers— could easily be converted for the car when you need it. The brand says that the cushion, once fully charged, can provide up to 5 hours of continuous heat. This could surely come in handy in a chilly car.

- **Get the Revix Seat Cover Cushion Pad from Amazon for \$54.99**
- **Get the Giant BioGear GameWarmer Battery Operated Seat Cushion from Amazon for \$59.99**

7. Bring an insulated mug to keep your drink warm for longer

When you're cold in your car, a hot drink can go a long way. So if you know you're going to be in your car for a while, consider bringing one with you ahead of your drive. Keep hot drinks like coffee and tea at the perfect temperature for long periods of time with a high-quality insulated mug like the Yeti Rambler Stainless Steel Mug.

We've tested plenty of Yeti products and especially love the Rambler products as they're ultra-durable, come in plenty of bold colors and—most importantly—keep drinks ice cold or piping hot for hours. This Yeti Rambler Stainless Steel Mug is perfect for drink holders in the car and is sure to come in handy on a cold winter's day.

Get the Yeti 20 oz. Rambler Tumbler from Amazon for \$35

8. Add a warm steering wheel cover

A steering wheel cover is a great investment for a cold winter. When you're in a pinch, a soft and fuzzy steering wheel cover can help to keep your hands warm, especially if you don't have a supply of hand warmers or mittens on you.

This plush microfiber steering wheel from Amazon receives high ratings from customers for its soft, warm fabric. Another similar option is this luxurious-looking cover that's said to be made from Australian sheepskin wool. With over 5,000 5-star reviews, shoppers love the plush and fuzzy material.

You can also get a heated steering wheel cover to keep things toasty. Similar to the heated seat cushion, you may only have it on for a couple of minutes while you run your engine, but it's enough to warm up your hands and keep the car warmer for a bit longer.

- **Get the Kafeek Plush Steering Wheel Cover from Amazon for \$19.99**
- **Get the Andalus Australian Sheepskin Wool Steering Wheel Cover from Amazon for \$13.97**
- **Get the Zadin Heated Steering Wheel Cover from Amazon for \$29.99**

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