

Strong winds warning – power and travel advice

With very strong winds forecast, it's important that people take care to protect themselves and their property. Disruption to traffic or travel is likely and power cuts are also a possibility. People should monitor the Met Office forecasts for their area, be aware of the weather conditions, and pay attention to safety warnings.

Emergency numbers

People should note the following numbers in case of emergency:

- Emergency services – 999 or 112
- Housing Executive – 03448 920 901
- Northern Ireland Electricity Networks – 03457 643 643
- NI Gas Emergency Service – 0800 002 001
- Northern Ireland Water Waterline – 03457 440 088
- Flooding Incident Line – 0300 2000 100

Roads information

If there are any problems on the roads, you can get the latest updates on the [this link](#):

Schools and Further Education colleges closures

All schools and Further Education colleges have been advised to close today (Monday 16 October) as a precautionary measure.

Forest and country park closures

Forests and country parks are closed to public access today (Monday 16 October) due to the severity of risk from falling trees and branches from the expected very strong winds.

You are advised to stay away from forests until the expected storm has passed and any damage is assessed. Please note that the risk is likely to last for some days.

Strong winds advice

You should:

- keep your property in a well-maintained condition (for example replace/repair any loose roof tiles, guttering, and so on that could potentially come loose and cause injury or damage to property)
- secure loose objects such as ladders, garden furniture, wheelie bins,

- trampolines, or anything else that could be blown around
- close and securely fasten doors and windows
- park vehicles in a garage (if you have one) or keep them clear of buildings, trees, walls, and fences
- make sure you are prepared should there be a power cut

During a storm you should:

- stay indoors as much as possible
- if you do go out, try not to walk or shelter close to buildings and trees
- not go outside to repair damage while the storm is ongoing
- not drive unless your journey is really necessary

After a storm you should:

- be careful not to touch any electrical/ telephone cables that have been blown down or are still hanging
- not walk too close to walls, buildings, and trees as they could have been weakened

Preparing for a power cut

It's important to be prepared for a potential loss of power. You should:

- know where your household fuses and trip switches are so that you can check if the problem is with your electrics only
- test smoke alarms regularly
- keep a supply of new batteries in torches and radios (for checking updates on news bulletins)
- keep a supply of candles
- keep mobile phones, laptops or tablets fully charged – so you will have use of battery power for a short time at least
- have the telephone numbers you might need to hand (as well as mobile phones, a non-mains powered landline telephone will help you stay in touch during any disruptions to your power supply)
- if you have a baby at home, make sure you have a supply of pre-prepared formula baby milk (if used) and prepare a flask of hot water to heat bottles and baby food (it is always safer to make up a fresh feed; when this is not possible, feeds should never be stored for longer than 24 hours)

If you depend on electrical equipment that is vital to your health, contact Northern Ireland Electricity (NIE) Networks to get on their Critical Care Register:

If your electricity goes off

If your electricity goes off, you should:

- check your fuses and trip switches – then check if your neighbours are without power

- leave one light on
- leave your fridge/ freezer switched on with the door shut to maintain a low temperature
- check that other electrical appliances and machinery are switched off at the wall
- preferably use a torch, oil or gas lamp as a source of light rather than candles
- if you must use naked flames, please take extra care and make certain that they are put out before you go to bed
- check on elderly or vulnerable neighbours in your area to make sure they are okay
- if you are using a generator, be careful where you site it in case of carbon monoxide poisoning

Reporting a power cut

If your power is off and you want to report it or get more information, contact NIE Networks Customer Helpline or visit their website:

Traffic and travel

High-sided vehicles are most affected by windy weather, but strong gusts can also blow a car, cyclist, motorcyclist or horse rider off course. This can happen on open stretches of road exposed to strong cross winds, or when passing bridges or gaps in the hedges.

In very windy weather a vehicle may be affected by turbulence created by large vehicles. Motorcyclists are particularly affected, so keep well back from them when they are overtaking a high-sided vehicle.

Motorists are also advised to drive with care due to possible wind-blown debris.

Pedestrians and road users in coastal areas should also beware of dangerous conditions caused by strong winds, particularly around times of high tide.

If there are any problems on the roads as a result of strong winds, you can get the latest updates on the [TrafficwatchNI website](#).

If you're planning to travel by air or sea, you should check with the ferry company or airline in case there are any delays or cancellations.

More useful links

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Improving reading skills and discovering joy of books

Books allow us to experience the pleasure of reading, opening up a world of fun, enjoyment and learning for children, young people and adults.

Libraries

Public libraries are obviously a great source of books. If you're not currently a member of a library, think about joining.

They have a large selection of books for all ages, including eBooks, large print books, and audio books on CD.

But as well as books, libraries also offer a wide range of free services, including:

- loaning of magazines and eMagazines
- local history resources
- computer use
- internet access and Wi-Fi

You can find out more information on the [libraries page](#).

Reading to your child

Parents are advised to do what they can to encourage their children to develop their reading skills. Taking the time to read to a child can help them to discover the joy of reading.

Whether it's reading a story to little ones at bedtime or enjoying a novel together with an older child, parents and families can help boost children's reading ability and, in turn, their learning potential.

Parents can also encourage children to put the computer games aside for a while, pick up a book instead and get their child to read out loud to them.

You can get useful tips and advice in the following section:

Parental involvement and encouragement, no matter how small, can have a direct and long-lasting effect on a child's educational achievements.

More useful links

Stay safe when mixing slurry

Date published: 06 February 2019

Farmers are being urged to take extra care when mixing slurry. It's vital to follow recommended safety advice and stay out of the mixing building for at least half an hour. Just one breath of slurry gas can cause serious injury or even death.

Dangerous gases

Slurry gas is a mixture of gases, including the extremely poisonous hydrogen sulphide.

Even a low concentration of hydrogen sulphide can knock out your sense of smell, so you won't even know it's there.

At higher concentrations you will quickly find it harder to breathe and become confused – and at certain concentrations, just one breath can kill.

When mixing slurry you should:

- keep children away from the area at all times
- if possible, mix on a windy day
- open all doors and windows
- take all animals out of the building before starting
- use outside mixing points first
- if slats are removed, cover exposed areas of the tank beside the pump/mixer to stop anything falling in
- after starting the pump/mixer, get out and stay out of the building for as long as possible – at least 30 minutes
- make sure that another adult knows what you are doing, stays outside and can get help if needed if you have to go into the building,
- if you have to re-enter the building to move the pump or change the direction of the pump, leave as soon as this is done – do not go back in for as long as possible (at least another 30 minutes)
- never rely on filter-type facemasks
- never use gas monitors as a substitute for working safely
- never allow naked flames near slurry, as the gas mixture is flammable
- never stand close to the exhaust of a vacuum tanker when it is being filled

Find out more about working safely with slurry, contact the helpline on 0800 0320 121 or find useful information at the following link:

The advice is clear: stop, think and stay safe when working with slurry.

More useful links

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Avoiding accidental fires in the home

There are basic fire safety measures you can take at home. Following some simple steps and being aware of obvious dangers can help to reduce the risk of an accidental fire and prevent damage and potential loss of life.

Causes of accidental fires

The top causes of accidental fires in the home are:

- cooking or cooking appliances (cookers, ovens, hotplates, grill pans, deep fat fryers, microwaves and toasters)
- electricity supply or other electrical equipment and appliances (plugs, lighting and cables, washing machines, dishwashers and tumble dryers)
- smoking or smoking-related materials (cigarettes, matches and lighters)

Cooking

Fires from cooking and cooking appliances can be avoided by:

- never leaving cooking unattended
- turning off hobs and ovens when finished cooking
- keeping flammable items such as tea towels and oven gloves away from the cooker
- keeping oven and grill pans free from a build-up of oils and grease, which can easily catch fire
- never throwing water onto an oil-based fire

Electrical equipment

Fires from electrical equipment can be avoided by:

- never overloading sockets
- never leaving electrical appliances such as dishwashers or washing machines running overnight or when you leave the house

Smoking

Fires from smoking materials can be avoided by:

- never smoking in bed or when feeling drowsy or tired
- always stubbing cigarettes out fully in an ashtray

‘STOP’ fire

‘STOP Fire’ is an easy to remember fire safety tool for everyone to use. It’s an instant checklist focusing on fire safety basics:

- [smoke alarms](#) – make sure you have at least one working smoke alarm on every floor
- test weekly – test your smoke alarm weekly or ask someone to check it for you
- obvious fire safety dangers – look out for obvious fire safety dangers, stub out cigarettes, and never leave cooking unattended
- planned escape – have a planned escape, keep access routes clear, close all doors at night and have your keys at the ready

You can find out more about fire safety at the pages below:

Be responsible and protect yourself, your family and your home from fire.

Home Fire Safety Check

Those most at risk from death or injury from accidental fires are:

- people aged 60 or older
- people who have a disability, impaired mobility or a health condition that would affect their ability to be aware of or respond to an emergency in the home
- people who get assistance from a visiting agency on a regular basis to help with day-to-day tasks

That’s why [Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service](#) is offering anyone who falls into one of these categories a [free Home Fire Safety Check](#).

Firefighters will install or check that smoke alarms are working, help to identify any obvious dangers, and advise on an escape plan.

More useful links

Helping the environment by recycling

Date published: 28 September 2017

Everyone is being encouraged to help the environment by recycling more material, including food waste. Reduce, reuse and recycle where possible as part of the household daily routine.

Food waste

Food waste makes up a significant amount of the household waste we throw out each week.

Making the effort to recycle this food waste can greatly help to improve the environment.

Even small bits of food, like tea bags and coffee grounds, can be recycled.

It is important that everyone uses the recycling services provided by [councils](#) throughout the year.

Locally-produced compost from recycled food waste is being used within our local parks and community gardens, keeping them in good condition for the growth of flowers, fruit and vegetables.

More useful links

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