

COMMUNICATIONS

TOOLKIT: WINDSTORMS



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Introduction

The intent of the **Communication Toolkit: Floods** is to assist messaging before, during and after a wind storm event in Oregon. This toolkit contains information on communications with the media, partners and the public. During an emergency or disaster, the need for timely and accurate information, regarding what happened and what is being done, skyrockets. This toolkit will help coordinate messages.

This toolkit contains templates and suggested talking points. Areas highlighted in yellow are meant to be edited to your specific agency.

Messages to the Public

Key Messages

- Be aware of weather conditions in your area before driving.
- Do not walk or drive through areas with downed power lines or debris.
- Begin clean-up as soon as the windstorm passes and it is safe.
- Heed the advice of emergency officials regarding evacuations.
- Have an emergency plan and kit.
- Opt into emergency notification systems.
- Donate cash (not supplies) only to official non-profit organizations.

Expanded Messages

Preparing for a Windstorm

- Have an emergency kit with necessary supplies to [Be2Weeks Ready](#).
- Have a family plan with meeting places and [a communications plan](#).
- Designate an out-of-state contact. Local phone lines may be bogged down, but a long-distance call may go through.
- Text messages may go through easier than a phone call.
- Secure outdoor items that could become projectiles, such as patio furniture or garbage bins.
- Trim trees and branches around your home to prevent potential damage from high winds.
- Know the terms:
 - **Wind Watch:** Conditions are favorable for high winds. Be aware and prepare.
 - **Wind Warning:** High winds are expected or occurring. Take immediate action to protect yourself and your property.
- Prepare for power outages by charging your devices, having flashlights and batteries handy, having a battery operated radio and keeping a supply of non-perishable food and water on hand.

Article with more tips: <https://apps.oregon.gov/oregon-newsroom/OR/OEM/Posts/Post/Prepare-for-Winter-Storms-Tips-to-Stay-Safe-During-Power-Outages>

During a windstorm

- **Seek shelter indoors:** Find a sturdy building and stay inside. Avoid mobile homes as they may not be safe in strong winds.

- **Stay away from windows:** High winds can shatter windows, causing injury from flying glass. Stay away from windows and doors.
- **Heed evacuation orders:** If local authorities issue an evacuation order, follow it immediately.
- **Avoid downed power lines:** Assume that any downed power lines are live and stay far away. Report them to your utility company.
- **Drive carefully:** If you must drive, be aware of debris and fallen trees on the road. Reduce speed and increase following distance.
- **Stay informed:** Keep updated with weather reports and emergency instructions from officials through a battery-powered radio or your smartphone.
- **Protect your head:** If you are outside and cannot find shelter, protect your head with your arms and seek refuge in a low-lying area away from trees and power lines.
- **Avoid elevators:** Use stairs instead of elevators, as power outages could trap you inside.
- **Handle generators safely:** Never use a generator, grill, camp stove, or other gasoline, propane, natural gas, or charcoal-burning devices inside. Locate units outside and keep them at least 20 feet from doors, windows, and vents.

If You Are Trapped in a Building

- **Stay in an interior room:** Move to the smallest, most interior room on the lowest level of the building. Avoid windows and exterior walls.
- **Listen for updates:** Keep a battery-powered radio or your smartphone handy for emergency updates and instructions.
- **Signal for help:** If you need rescue, use a whistle, flashlight, or bright cloth to signal for help.

If You Are in Your Vehicle

- **Stay in the vehicle:** Take shelter in your car if you are not near a sturdy building. If possible, drive to a nearby sturdy building. Otherwise, move your car to a location where it is less likely to be hit by falling trees or power lines.
- **Park safely:** Avoid parking under trees, power lines, or other structures that could fall. Try to park in an open area away from potential hazards.
- **If no shelter is available:** Avoid trees, power lines, and the side of the road. Keep in mind that power lines that are laying on the ground may be live. Do not go near them! Try to find a place that will block blowing or falling debris.
- **If you are driving:** If you aren't near a sturdy building, hold the steering wheel with both hands and slow down.

- **Keep a distance:** Give space to high profile vehicles such as trucks, buses and vehicles towing trailers. One strong gust of wind can be enough to flip one of these trailers onto its side

Article with more tips: <https://www.statefarm.com/simple-insights/residence/ways-to-stay-safe-during-a-severe-wind-event>

After a windstorm

- **Return home safely:** Once public officials determine it is safe, you can return to your home and begin recovery efforts.
- **Inspect for damage:** Check your property for damage. Wear safety glasses and heavy work gloves to protect yourself from injury.
- **Start cleaning up:** Begin clean-up as soon as it is safe. Clear debris, fallen branches, and other hazards.
- **Document damage:** Take photos of any damage to buildings and contents. This will help with insurance claims.
- **Save receipts:** Keep receipts and insurance claim information associated with clean-up and repairs.
- **Check utilities:** Inspect crawl spaces, basements, and other areas for wet insulation or compromised systems. Be cautious around electrical equipment.
- **Avoid downed power lines:** Assume all downed power lines are live and stay far away. Report them to your utility company.
- **Use caution with chainsaws:** Wear safety gear when cutting branches. Avoid contact with power lines and use electric chainsaws with caution.
- **Consult authorities:** Contact your insurance agent and local government officials for information on building permits, repairs, and safety guidelines.
- **Verify [contractor licenses](#)** from the Oregon State Building Codes Division to protect yourself from fraud.

Article with more tips: <https://apps.oregon.gov/oregon-newsroom/OR/OEM/Posts/Post/Staying-Safe-After-a-Windstorm>

Press Releases

Templates

MEDIA RELEASE

Contact: [Contact Name]

Phone: [Contact Phone Number]

Email: [Contact Email Address]

[Headline: Wind Storm Advisory Issued for [City/Region]]

[City, State] – A wind storm advisory has been issued for [City/Region] starting [date and time]. Residents are advised to take necessary precautions and stay informed through official sources. Strong winds are expected to reach [wind speed] and may cause damage to property and power outages.

Emergency officials urge residents to secure outdoor items, avoid travel if possible, and stay indoors during the peak of the storm. For more information, please visit [Website URL] or follow us on [Social Media Handles].

###

[Agency Name] [Agency Media Contact]

Sample Release

Contact Information: 503-934-3310 Or OEM_PublicInfo@oem.oregon.gov

Windstorm Advisory for the Southern Oregon Coast: Falling Branches and Power Line Precautions

SOUTH OREGON COAST - Residents are preparing for continued wind storms along the Southern Oregon Coast this weekend, bringing strong gusts and increased risks of falling tree branches and downed power lines. Emergency management officials urge the public to stay vigilant, be properly prepared for wind hazards, and follow safety guidelines to protect homes, vehicles, and personal well-being.

Risk of Falling Branches Many regions in Oregon are experiencing strong wind gusts, which can cause branches—or even entire trees—to snap unexpectedly. Falling branches pose a danger to:

- **Vehicles:** Branches can damage cars, so avoid parking under trees whenever possible.
- **Pedestrians:** Tree limbs can break without warning, so be extra cautious when walking outdoors.
- **Power lines:** Branches falling onto power lines may cause electrical hazards or widespread outages.

Power Outage Preparedness Downed branches can disrupt utility lines, potentially leading to extended power outages. To prepare:

- **Stock up on essentials:** Have flashlights, batteries, portable chargers, and blankets ready in case the lights go out.
- **Keep extra supplies:** If safe to do so, store a few days' worth of food and water, especially in rural areas where utility restoration may be delayed.
- **Stay informed:** Monitor local weather updates through official channels. Follow any advisories from the [National Weather Service](#) or [your local emergency management office](#). Sign-up for alerts at ORAlert.gov and make sure you have [Wireless Emergency Alerts enabled](#) on your phone.

What to Do if a Power Line Falls A downed power line is extremely dangerous. If you see or suspect a live wire has fallen on your property, car, or near your home:

- **Stay away and call for help:** Immediately call 911 and report the downed line. Then contact your local utility provider. Do not approach or attempt to move the line. Even if it appears inactive, it could still be energized.
- **If a power line falls on your car:** Stay inside your vehicle. Do not step out unless there is an urgent threat like a fire. If you must exit (e.g., due to fire), open the door carefully, jump out without touching the car and the ground at the same time, then land with your feet together. Shuffle or hop away, keeping both feet close together to minimize electrical risk.
- **Keep others clear:** Alert neighbors and passersby to the hazard. Set up a safe perimeter, if possible, to prevent anyone from accidentally coming into contact with the live wire.

General Safety Tips

- **Use caution around trees:** Weakened limbs can break at any moment—keep an eye on overhead branches and fallen debris.
- **Dress appropriately:** Windy conditions can change quickly, and debris can cause injuries if you're not properly protected.
- **Only travel when necessary:** If travel is absolutely necessary, drive with extreme caution and be prepared for sudden changes in visibility. Leave plenty of room between you and the motorist ahead of you and allow extra time to reach your destination. Check road conditions before driving and let someone know your route if you must travel.

###

It is the mission of Oregon Emergency Management to proactively develop emergency response, risk reduction and disaster recovery programs to better serve Oregonians during times of disaster. OEM prioritizes an equitable and inclusive culture of preparedness that empowers all Oregonians to thrive in times in crisis. The agency leads collaborative statewide efforts, inclusive of all partners and the communities we serve, to ensure capability to get help in an emergency and to protect, mitigate, prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergencies or disasters. For more information about the OEM, visit oregon.gov/oem. You can get this document in other languages, large print, braille, or a format you prefer. For assistance, email OEM_publicinfo@oem.oregon.gov or dial 711.

Social Media Messaging

The following are suggested social media engagement tools and can be posted directly or edited to suit your agency's needs. When posting on Twitter and Facebook use the event hashtag, other commonly used hashtags or combinations.

Commonly used hashtags:

#WindSafety
#WeatherReady
#StormSafety
#HighWinds
#StaySafe
#WindAlert
#PrepareForWind
#WindStorm
#SafetyFirst
#EmergencyPreparedness

Videos and Multimedia

It is best to accompany social media posts with photos and videos whenever possible.

Videos:

- Know Your Risk: Water & Wind (English): <https://youtu.be/9CZxOM-4mjc>
- Conozca Su Riesgo: Agua y Viento (Spanish): <https://youtu.be/d885oBifV5Q>

Social Media and Infographics

- [NOAA Wind Hazards Information Page](#)
- [NOAA High Wind Social Media Toolkit](#)

Twitter Messages

The following messages can be posted to your agency's local twitter account. We encourage you to retweet messages from [@OregonOEM](#) and tag OEM in your tweets.

Twitter accounts to watch and retweet:

[@GovTinaKotek](#) – Oregon Governor Tina Kotek
[@NWSPortland](#) – Portland National Weather Service
[@NWSPendleton](#) – Pendleton National Weather Service
[@OregonDOT](#) – Oregon Department of Transportation
[@PBOTinfo](#) – Portland Bureau of Transportation

[@RedCrossCasc](#) – American Red Cross Cascades Region
[@PUCOregon](#) – Oregon Public Utility Commission (PUC)

Scripted Tweets

- "Turn Around, Don't Risk It. Avoid walking or driving through areas with severe wind conditions."
- Call 511 or use ODOT's Tripcheck for the latest road conditions before traveling during windstorms. [Tripcheck.com](http://www.tripcheck.com)
- [@NWSPortland](#) issued a Wind Watch for [area]. Make sure your family is prepared. <http://www.ready.gov/windstorms>
- Strong winds and a wind advisory this week! Do not attempt to travel through areas with high wind speeds. Find alternate routes: [Tripcheck.com](http://www.tripcheck.com)
- If you lose power, use FoodSafety.gov food charts to decide what to keep and what to toss. Don't let your business suffer. Make a #WindSafety plan today: <https://www.ready.gov/business>

Facebook Messages

The following messages can be posted to your agency's local Facebook account. We encourage you to share posts from the [Oregon Office of Emergency Management](#) and tag OEM in your posts.

Facebook Accounts to watch and share:

- [Oregon Department of Emergency Management](#)
- [US National Weather Service Pendleton Oregon](#)
- [Oregon Department of Transportation \(ODOT\)](#)
- [Portland Bureau of Transportation \(PBOT\)](#)
- [Red Cross Cascades Region](#)
- [Oregon Public Utility Commission \(PUC\)](#)

Scripted Posts

- **Turn Around, Don't Risk It.** Strong winds can knock down trees and power lines, making roads extremely dangerous. Avoid walking and driving in areas with severe wind conditions. It could save your life.
- **Before heading out for your morning commute,** use TripCheck to get the latest updates on weather and road conditions: <http://www.tripcheck.com/>
- **Do you have a plan if your power goes out?** Take time to check your emergency kit before a storm hits and check the batteries in flashlights. If you don't already have a kit, here's a list of recommended items: <http://www.ready.gov/kit>
- **Are you still under a Wind Warning?** Get the latest weather updates from the NWS Oregon Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/NWSPortland/>
- **If your home was without power, your food may be at risk.** Perishable foods can

rapidly grow bacteria when kept at improper temperatures. Educate yourself on proper food storage and health risks of food. Use [FoodSafety.gov](https://www.foodsafety.gov) food charts to help determine what to keep and what to toss.

- **Prepare for power outages!** Charge your devices, have flashlights and batteries handy, get a battery powered radio and keep a supply of non-perishable food and water on hand.

- **Prepare your home for the coming wind!** Secure outdoor items that could become projectiles, such as patio furniture or garbage bins. Trim trees and branches around your home to prevent potential damage from high winds.
- Know Your Terms:
 - **Wind Watch:** Conditions are favorable for high winds. Be aware and prepare.
 - **Wind Warning:** High winds are expected or occurring. Take immediate action to protect yourself and your property.
- **Check out these safety tips for returning to your home after a windstorm:**
 - Be mindful of where you are walking and driving, be on the lookout for debris.
 - Avoid downed powerlines.
 - Take photos of any damages to your property for the insurance company.
 - For more tips and information on windstorms, check out <https://www.weather.gov/wrn/winter-wind-sm>