

Weather the Storm

Practical Actions to Prepare for Ice Storms and Power Outages

Freezing rain is an increasing winter hazard across Ontario due to climate change, creating the conditions for rapid ice accumulation and cascading impacts.

Ice events can quickly disrupt transportation, utilities, access to essential services, and damage local ecosystems, posing challenges for small and rural communities operating with limited staff and resources. Integrating low-cost actions into existing municipal processes now can help reduce disruption and help your community respond more effectively during the next winter storm.

How to Read Cost and Effort Scales

\$	In-Kind/Staff Time	⚙️	Implement through routine operations
\$\$	Cover within existing budgets	⚙️⚙️	Some dedicated coordination required
\$\$\$	Additional resources required	⚙️⚙️⚙️	At the upper-end of a quick-win action

Establish Mutual Aid Agreements for Recovery

Develop or review agreements that define how neighbouring municipalities, utilities, and service providers can share crews and equipment to accelerate restoration and recovery.

When to Get Started: Winter operations planning and annual emergency response coordination meetings.

-  Recommended Lead: Public Works
-  [Explore Grey County's mutual assistance agreement as a model](#)

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Potential Partners

- Emergency Management
- Utilities

Key Metric

% of critical recovery services with backup support available

Incorporate Ice Resilience into Tree Management

Consider ice storm vulnerability when selecting tree species, planting locations, and pruning schedules to reduce branch failures near roads, utilities, and public facilities.

When to Get Started: Forest management updates and routine vegetation maintenance planning.

-  Recommended Lead: Public Works
-  [Discover how the City of Barrie incorporated lessons from the 2025 ice storm into routine tree planting.](#)

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Potential Partners

- Asset Management
- Conservation Authority
- Utilities

Key Metric

of priority trees or locations addressed

Develop Winter Storm Communications Toolkit

Create ready-to-use communications templates covering power outages and downed-lines safety, road closures, warming locations, debris cleanup, and recovery updates.

When to Get Started: Annual communications planning before winter storm season.

-  Recommended Lead: Emergency Management
-  [Adapt this winter weather social media package developed by the Province of British Columbia](#)

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Potential Partners

- Communications
- Public Works
- Utilities

Key Metric

of standardized communication products developed and ready for use

Reduce Barriers to Debris Recovery

Review debris cleanup procedures and identify opportunities to create flexible approaches and services for residents facing mobility, age, or accessibility barriers.

When to Get Started: Annual winter preparedness planning or service delivery reviews.

-  Recommended Lead: Public Works
-  [See how Ontario Corps volunteer networks can support storm recovery.](#)

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Potential Partners

- Communications
- Ontario Corps
- Local Volunteer Groups

Key Metric

% of debris support requests successfully supported

Review Readiness for Extended Outages

Conduct a tabletop exercise across municipal departments, simulating a prolonged power outage to stress test backup power and essential service continuity plans.

When to Get Started: Annual emergency exercises and continuity planning reviews.

-  Recommended Lead: Emergency Management
-  [Adapt the IESO's Emergency Drills and Exercises Guide](#)

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Potential Partners

- Facilities
- Community Services
- Utilities

Key Metric

% of priority preparedness and essential service continuity gaps addressed

Your dedicated partner in climate adaptation

Working on a climate-related project? Our ORCCA Support Desk can help with:

- Accessing Climate Information
- Adaptation Planning
- Finding Tools and Resources
- Building Capacity and Advancing Action
- Making Connections

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