



Cold Weather Survival Guide: Humans & Dogs (Colorado)

Colorado winters are unpredictable and can become deadly quickly. Cold temperatures, wind, and moisture increase the risk of hypothermia and frostbite. This guide provides detailed, real-world survival strategies along with local resources to help you and your dog stay safe.

1. Stay Dry at All Costs

Wet clothing removes body heat rapidly. Snow, sweat, and melted ice can all soak through layers. If clothing becomes wet, remove or replace it as soon as possible. Use plastic bags, tarps, or extra layers to keep yourself and your bedding dry.

2. Layering Strategy

Use three layers when possible: a base layer (keeps skin dry), an insulating layer (traps heat like fleece or wool), and an outer layer (blocks wind and moisture). Even improvised materials like newspaper, cardboard, or extra clothing can help trap heat.

3. Wind Protection

Wind can drop your effective temperature significantly. Set up near buildings, under bridges, or behind barriers. Use tarps, cardboard, or other materials to create a windbreak.

4. Insulate from the Ground

The ground pulls heat from your body. Always create a barrier using cardboard, blankets, foam pads, or anything available. Multiple layers are better than one.

5. Nutrition & Hydration

Your body burns more calories in the cold. Eat whenever possible, especially high-calorie foods. Drink water regularly—dehydration still happens in cold weather and worsens hypothermia risk.

6. Protect Extremities

Hands, feet, ears, and nose are most vulnerable. Keep them covered and dry. Change socks if they become wet. Use gloves or wrap hands in cloth if needed.

7. Recognize Hypothermia

Early signs: shivering, fatigue, confusion. Advanced signs: slurred speech, clumsiness, drowsiness, no shivering. If severe, this is a medical emergency—warm slowly and seek help.

8. Protect Your Dog

Use coats, blankets, or bedding. Keep your dog off cold ground. Watch for shaking, whining, slowing down, or curling tightly—these are signs they are too cold.

9. Paw & Ice Safety

Snow, ice, and road salt can damage paws. Wipe paws when possible and keep them dry. Avoid prolonged exposure to frozen surfaces.

10. Stay Aware & Ready to Move

Weather and enforcement conditions can change quickly. Keep belongings organized so you can move safely if needed.

Warming Centers (Colorado Springs)

Springs Rescue Mission – 5 W Las Vegas St

Provides overnight shelter and warming services during cold weather. Typically opens in the evening and operates overnight.

City-Activated Warming Centers – Locations vary

Activated during extreme cold weather events. Locations are announced by the City of Colorado Springs and local outreach organizations.

Always check with outreach teams or local announcements for current locations and hours.

City Cold Weather Activation

Warming centers are generally activated when temperatures reach around 20°F or below, often factoring in wind chill. Exact activation depends on conditions and city decisions. When activated, additional resources and shelter options may become available.

Free Bus Transportation

Mountain Metro Transit buses are free to warming centers when temperatures are at or below 19°F. Tell the driver you are going to a warming center. This can be critical for reaching safe shelter during extreme cold.

Where to Get Blankets & Hand Warmers

Pay It Fur-Ward outreach – direct distribution during outreach runs

Springs Rescue Mission – often provides blankets and cold weather supplies

Local churches & community outreach – frequently distribute supplies during cold weather

El Paso County Public Health – may distribute during emergency conditions

Mutual aid groups & donation drives – vary by location and timing

Pay It Fur-Ward — Love Without Judgement

Helping humans & their furry friends