



Phillips County KS

Emergency Management

FEBRUARY 2026

If you need assistance or have winter preparation questions please don't hesitate to contact the Phillips County Emergency Management Office - 785-540-4262 or my Cell - 785-302-0850

Did you know? Snow is not white

Snow is not actually white, but rather translucent. It's the light reflecting off it that makes it appear white with the many sides of the snowflake scattering light in many directions, diffusing the entire color spectrum.

Winter is Coming

Winter weather is one of the most predictable hazards we face. We know when it is coming. We understand the risks. We can model the impacts with increasing precision. And yet every year we still see preventable injuries, preventable deaths, and avoidable strain on response systems.

Winter tests our continuity of operations, transportation systems, healthcare access, utilities, and the fragile edges of social support. They also reveal something else that we often talk about but do not always prioritize in practice: preparedness communication saves lives.

Winter's Real Risk

For most residents, winter storms are inconvenient. Travel slows. Schools close. Power flickers. Life becomes uncomfortable for a few days.

For others, winter is dangerous.

Older adults living alone, individuals with disabilities, people dependent on electrically powered medical devices, those with limited transportation, and families already on the edge of economic insecurity face a much narrower margin of safety. A few hours without heat. A missed dialysis appointment. A refrigerator that cannot keep medications cold. A mobility device that cannot be recharged.

Power outages amplify every one of these vulnerabilities. When electricity fails, the systems that quietly sustain daily life fail with it. Oxygen concentrators, ventilators, home dialysis machines, refrigerated medications, and basic communications all become fragile. What begins as an infrastructure issue quickly becomes a medical emergency.

How to prepare for winter.

Utilize cold weather gear (place extras into your vehicle, gloves, hats, coats, blanket etc.)

Stock essential supplies

Plan for a power outage

Knowing where to go for help before help is needed.

Check on those who may not be able to check on themselves.

Keep electronic devices fully charged (especially during predicted bad weather)

Winter is not a surprise

We also know that winter preparation competes for attention. Other hazards feel more urgent. Budgets are finite. Staff are stretched. There is always another crisis demanding focus.

But winter does not wait for us to catch our breath. It arrives every year on schedule.

Preparedness fatigue is real. So are competing priorities and limited resources. But winter is not a surprise. It is a certainty.

We cannot eliminate winter. But we can reduce its human cost.



What are the hazards in grain handling facilities?

The grain handling industry is a high hazard industry where workers can be exposed to numerous serious and life threatening hazards. These hazards include: fires and explosions from grain dust accumulation, suffocation from engulfment and entrapment in grain bins, falls from heights and crushing injuries and amputations from grain handling equipment.

Suffocation is a leading cause of death in grain storage bins. Suffocation can occur when a worker becomes buried (engulfed) by grain as they walk on moving grain or attempt to clear grain built up on the inside of a bin. Moving grain acts like "quicksand" and can bury a worker in seconds. "Bridged" grain and vertical piles of stored grain can also collapse unexpectedly if a worker stands on or near it. The behavior and weight of the grain make it extremely difficult for a worker to get out of it without assistance.

What can be done to reduce the hazards in grain handling facilities?

When workers enter storage bins, employers must (among other things):



Turn off and lock out all powered equipment associated with the bin, including augers used to help move the grain, so that the grain is not being emptied or moving out or into the bin. Standing on moving grain is deadly; the grain can act like "quicksand" and bury a worker in seconds. Moving grain out of a bin while a worker is in the bin creates a suction that can pull the workers into the grain in seconds.

Prohibit walking down grain and similar practices where an employee walks on grain to make it flow.

Provide all employees a body harness with a lifeline, or a boatswains chair, and ensure that it is secured prior to the employee entering the bin.

Provide an observer stationed outside the bin or silo being entered by an employee. Ensure the observer is equipped to provide assistance and that their only task is to continuously track the employee in the bin. Prohibit workers from entry into bins or silos underneath a bridging condition, or where a build-up of grain products on the sides could fall and bury them.

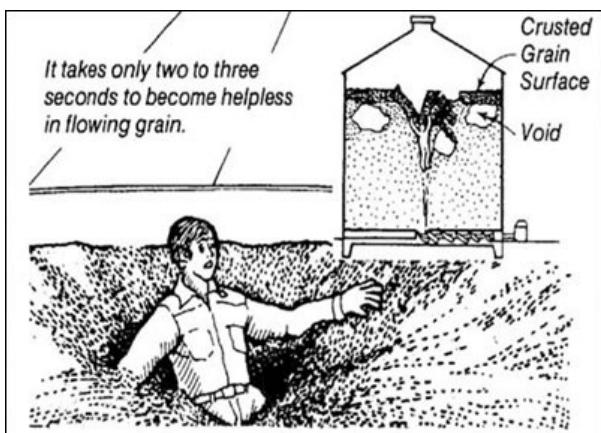


Illustration of grain engulfment hazard

Did you know? The Phillipsburg Fire Department is trained and equipped to respond to a grain engulfment hazard.

