

## Supervisor Brian Kulpa's October 2023 Message

Lessons learned. The Christmas blizzard of 2022 taught us many lessons about emergency preparation for extreme weather events, which are expected to increase. The [Town's Emergency Services & Safety Department](#) has been busy the past year assisting residents in preparing their homes and vehicles for a weather event that could strand them.

In the blizzard's After-Action Report, the Department of Emergency Services and Safety provided an overview on how the town and all our partners, residents included, can better prepare and respond to such events. Lessons were learned, changes were made. There is never a perfect response because storms happen and change in real time. But what we can do is heed the advice and warnings provided by meteorologists and emergency responders. Today's technology provided us significant warning before the blizzard crashed into Amherst. The newscasters warned residents, appropriately calling it a generational storm.



Our Director of Emergency Services and Safety recently held a free Emergency Preparedness Program at the Center for Senior Services. He shared that the one tip that he always stresses at any training is to pay attention and take notice of the announcements of bad weather coming. We all lead busy lives and sometimes people get too wrapped up in everything that they do not pay attention to alerts until it is too late.

Acknowledging a storm is coming, and reacting without overreacting, will go a long way in helping your family get through whatever hits us. Prepare but don't panic. These disasters take a community effort to get through them. Get to know your neighbors. Be aware of neighbors who have special needs, such as an elderly adult who may benefit greatly from you grabbing a few extra things from the grocery store to help hold them over. Another good tip is to know where your furnace vents are and if snow accumulation becomes significant, be prepared to safely clear the vents so they can continue to work properly. Blocked vents can be deadly.

We are safest at home but as we learned in this past storm, driving can become impossible quickly in blizzard conditions. Sadly, some of our neighboring communities reported fatalities of drivers who became stuck. In Amherst, we were able to rescue dozens of motorists, working with fire halls to house them, and our emergency dispatchers are credited with saving numerous lives by simply relaying life saving tips on how to stay warm, conserve battery, and avoid carbon monoxide poisoning. The bottom line is to pay attention and do not drive if you don't have to. If there is a driving ban in place, stay home. Not only is it extremely dangerous to be stranded, plow drivers cannot clear the roads if there are vehicles everywhere, significantly impacting cleanup and reopening the Town.

Despite warnings and planning, there will be situations where we have stranded motorists. To best be prepared for anything, motorists are urged to have a simple "go bag" in their vehicle with water, nutrient rich food, a flashlight, phone charger that can work in multiple different outlets. Also keep winter boots, blanket, gloves, hat, etc. in case you get stranded somewhere. There are many sources online to help, including the Town's Emergency Services and Safety Department webpage ([Prepare for Emergencies](#)). If you are on social media, be sure to follow [Amherst Emergency Services](#) and [Amherst Police](#) on social media for local updates and information.

Let's hope that snow is still a long way off, however, those who lived here in October 2006 know all too well that fall snow storms can be devastating. While we might be watching falling snow, plenty of leaves are accumulating around town. The Highway Department will be busy doing [leaf pick up](#). Reminder to not rake leaves into the street. It is unsafe, and can cause drainage issues if they block storm drains. If you notice a blocked drain, and safer clear it, please lend a hand and keep these drains open to collect storm water runoff and keep our streets clear of ponding.

Visit the Town's website, [www.amherst.ny.us](http://www.amherst.ny.us), and use the Keyword "Emergency" to find the town's Department of Emergency Services and Safety for helpful information to help you prepare.