

WINTER SAFETY GUIDELINES

Updated Nov. 2018

Personal Safety

Prevent Problems:

Stay healthy – physically and emotionally

- Get your flu shot
- Eat well
- Exercise regularly
- Wash your hands frequently
- Avoid contact with sick people, whenever possible
- Keep in contact with family and friends for social and emotional support

Stay warm by bundling up

- Many thin layers is better than one thick piece of material
- Rule of thumb: dress children and elders in one more extra layer (than an adult would wear)
- To keep infants from suffocating, opt for one-piece sleepers and wearable blankets

Know How to Identify Health Problems and How to Deal with Them:

Learn Signs and Treatment of Frostbite:

- Loss of feeling in the limbs
- White, gray, or blistered fingers, toes, ear lobes, nose tip
- Keep the person warm and dry, apply warm water to frostbitten areas, do not rub!
- ***Get medical help immediately.***

Learn Signs of Hypothermia and Treatment:

- Uncontrollable shivering
- Memory loss, disorientation, or incoherence
- Slurred speech, drowsiness, or apparent exhaustion
- Get the person to a warm location (warm the center of the body first), replace wet clothing with dry, and encourage them to drink plenty of warm (non-alcoholic) liquids.
- ***Get medical help immediately.***

Home Safety

Prevent Problems:

Winterize your home

- Install weather stripping, insulation, and storm windows
- Insulate water lines that run along exterior walls
- Clean out gutters and repair roof leaks
- Check your heating systems
 - Have your heating system serviced professionally to make sure that it is clean, working properly, and ventilated to the outside
 - Inspect and clean fireplaces and chimneys
 - Install a smoke detector. Test batteries monthly and replace them twice a year
 - Install a CO detector to alert you of the presence of this deadly, odorless, colorless gas. Check batteries when you change your clocks in the fall and spring
 - Learn symptoms of CO poisoning i.e. headache, dizziness, weakness, upset stomach, vomiting, chest pain, and confusion

Steps to Take When Carbon Monoxide Alarm Sounds

Never ignore a CO2 alarm, and do not try to find the source of the gas. Instead, follow these steps:

- Immediately move outside to fresh air
- Call emergency services, fire department or 911
- Do a head count to check that all persons are accounted for
- Do not reenter the premises until emergency responders have given you permission to do so

Equip in Advance for Emergencies to be prepared for weather-related emergencies, including power outages

- Stock food that needs no cooking or refrigeration and water stored in clean containers
- Have extra prescription medication on hand
- Ensure that your cell phone is fully charged.
- Keep an up-to-date emergency kit – **See FEMA website for items to be included**

Know How to Deal with Snow/Ice Outside Your Home:

- Sprinkle outdoor stairs, walkways, driveways etc. liberally with sand, rock salt or de-icing compounds to avoid slips and falls
- Use handrails on outdoor stairs when available
- Shovel carefully:
 - Stretch and warm up before you begin; take frequent breaks; cool down whenever you feel tired or strained
 - Position yourself so that you're shoveling the snow in front of your body
 - Avoid shoveling if you're out of shape or have cardiac issues
 - Do not drink alcohol prior to or while shoveling

- Do not smoke while shoveling
- If using a snow blower, follow the owner's manual's guidelines:
 - Always turn off the machine before touching or adjusting it
 - Never leave a snowblower unattended while it's running
 - Before you begin, fill the snow blower with fuel, while the engine is still cool

Vehicle Safety

Prevent Problems:

Prepare Your Car for Cold and Snow:

- Service the radiator and maintain antifreeze level; check tire tread or, if necessary, replace tires with all-weather or snow tires
- Keep gas tank full to avoid ice in the tank and fuel lines
- Use a wintertime formula in your windshield washer and keep the windshield washer container full
- Prepare a winter emergency kit to keep in your car in case you become stranded
- The kit should include, at least the following:
 - blankets
 - booster cables, flares, tire pump and a bag of sand or cat litter (for traction)
 - flashlight and extra batteries
 - first-aid kit

Know How to Deal with Problems on the Road:

- Pull off the road, if possible.
- Put on your flashers
- Use your cell phone to call for assistance, 911
- Stay with your vehicle unless instructed differently

Miscellaneous Safety:

- Report damaged/downed power lines and/or gas lines
- Check on family and neighbors who are especially at risk from cold weather hazards.

Helpful Websites:

- CDC, www.cdc.gov
- National Safety Council, www.nsc.org
- UPMC Pinnacle Wellness Library, www.pinnaclehealth.org
- FEMA, www.fema.gov
- US Fire Administration, www.usfa.fema.gov