



State of Delaware Issue CLXI January 2020  
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## 10 WINTER SAFETY TIPS

With temperatures dropping and snow starting to fall, winter weather is here - and so are the challenges that come with it. The coldest season of the year can have serious effects on your health, your home, and many other aspects of your life. Follow the expert advice below to stay safe and warm no matter the winter weather conditions.

**1 Keep a hard copy of emergency contacts and important numbers.** Severe weather is a common cause of power outages, and we all know winter can bring some of the most extreme storms. To avoid being completely isolated and vulnerable in the event you experience a power outage at home, keep an up-to-date physical document of emergency contacts and other important numbers that you can locate, even in the dark.

**2 Keep an emergency cold-weather kit in your car.** The snow, ice, and poor visibility that winter brings make for driving conditions that are less than ideal, causing an uptick in accidents. So when you have to drive in bad winter weather—or any inclement weather, for that matter—it's best to be prepared for the worst. To be prepared pack a small bag of winter essentials like flashlights, car chargers, bottled water, warm clothing, thermal blankets and snacks in the trunk of a car, which will greatly increase chances of survival if a mishap occurs.

**3 Don't wear cotton.** Be sure that warm clothing you pack in your emergency car kit is made of the right material. We all love the touch and feel of cotton, all easy-breezy and unrestrictive, but in the cold, cotton should not be the fabric of your life. Not only does it provide little to no insulation from the cold, but it can also absorb a lot of water—up to 27 times its weight, according to the experts at the Appalachian Mountain Club. And wearing damp clothing in cold weather is one of the many ways you can get hypothermia. Instead, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends wearing fabrics like wool, silk, or polypropylene for inner layers.

**4 Keep thermal blankets at home and in your car.** Thermal blankets can help you through even the coldest of cold weather. They are the cheapest and easiest way to ensure you and your family will always be safe and warm in the winter. As well as being relatively inexpensive, thermal blankets are extremely small and compact.

**5 Know your weather-related vocabulary.** With so many different types of winter weather conditions, it's hard to know exactly what to expect when you hear an alert come over the TV or radio. For instance, a "winter storm watch" means that hazardous winter weather is *likely* to arrive in the next 12 to 24 hours, while a "winter storm warning" means dangerous winter weather is imminent. To expand upon your winter weather lexicon, you can consult the *Old Farmer's Almanac*, which has a comprehensive list.

**6 Don't drink too much.** Intoxicants actually lower your body's core temperature. So, after having several drinks, which seemingly make you *feel* warm, don't brave the cold without being properly dressed.

**7 Cover up your hands and feet in particular.** Properly dressed for winter means protecting your body's extremities, where cases of frostbite most commonly occur. When you're cold, your body pulls blood from your hands and feet to your core in order to warm up your overall body temperature and vital organs. But that leads to decreased blood flow to your extremities, which can cause frostbite—hence the value of having a good pair of mittens/gloves, winter boots, and warm socks.

**8 Stretch regularly to avoid injuries.** Avoiding winter injuries may not be your first thought during the winter months, but in cold weather, it's important to stretch, even if you aren't planning on exercising. Muscles contract and tighten when the weather gets colder, which makes them more prone to injury. Regular stretching during winter months is crucial to maintain good muscle health and critical before any strenuous activity outside.

**9 Check your carbon monoxide detector.** According to the CDC, the winter months bring an increased risk of fatal carbon monoxide poisoning due to the constant running of home heating systems. The good news is that it's easily preventable. The first step is to make sure your detector is working properly and to change out the batteries at the start of the winter season.

**10 Be careful with space heaters.** Everyone wants a warm home when it's cold outside, and sometimes that requires bringing in an extra heat source, like a space heater, for optimal warmth. But that comes with a whole other set of concerns, considering that more than 65,000 home fires in the United States are caused by heating equipment each year, according to the Electrical Safety Foundation International. Space heater safety involves plugging them directly into their own outlet, turning them off and unplugging them when you leave the room, and keeping them at least three feet away from any flammable materials, such as clothing, floor coverings and curtains/drapes.

## News & Notes

### CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING

According to the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the first month of the year is the worst for carbon monoxide poisoning. At

least two people die each day from carbon monoxide poisoning in January—three times the fatality rate recorded in August and July.

Unintentional carbon monoxide exposure accounts for 15,000 or more emergency room visits annually, with an average of more than 400 people dying each year.

Fatalities are highest among men and senior citizens: Men because they are engaged in more high-risk behaviors such as working with fuel-burning tools or appliances and seniors because they are likely to mistake the symptoms of CO poisoning (headaches, nausea, dizziness or confusion) for the flu or fatigue.

It should come as no surprise that CO deaths are the highest in winter (December is the second highest month). Cold weather increases the use of gas-powered furnaces as well as the use of risky alternative heating and power sources (portable generators, charcoal briquettes, propane stoves or grills) during power outages.

It's also understandable that the highest CO death rates are in colder states: Nebraska, Wyoming, Alaska, Montana and North Dakota. By contrast, California has the lowest fatality rate.

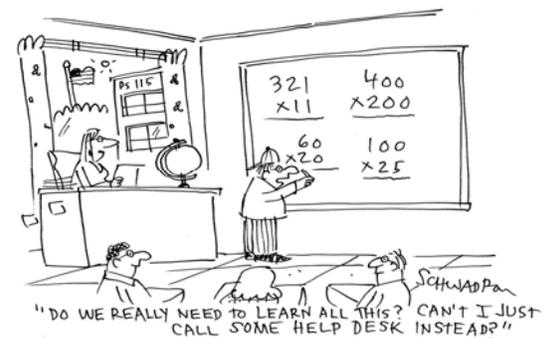
The Consumer Product Safety Commission warns that you should **never ignore a carbon monoxide alarm**, and do not try to find the source of the gas. Instead, follow these steps:

\*Immediately move outside to fresh air

\*Call emergency services, fire department or 911

\*Do a head count to check to account for everyone

\*Do not reenter the premises until emergency responders have given you permission to do so



### RIDDLES OF THE MONTH

- 1) Why did Dylan put the January calendar in the refrigerator?
- 2) What moves faster, heat or cold?
- 3) How is music like an icy sidewalk?
- 4) Why do birds fly south for the winter?
- 5) What did the happy lamp say to the grumpy lamp?

Answers on Page 2



## TEN TIPS FOR SAFE WALKING IN THE SNOW AND ICE

Falls account for more than one million injuries in the U.S. annually. There are four types of walking accidents. The most common walking accident is the slip and fall. That's the type of fall that happens when you fall when a surface has not been cleared of snow or ice. The following ten tips for safe walking will help you avoid slips and falls:

**TIP #1:** Wear proper footwear. Proper footwear should place the entire foot on the surface of the ground and have visible treads. Avoid a smooth sole and opt for a heavy treaded shoe with a flat bottom. If you need additional traction in the ice buy a pair of removeable ice cleats to use on your winter boots/shoes. They are inexpensive, help provide additional traction and may save you from falling.

**TIP #2:** Accessorize to see and be seen. Wear sunglasses so that you can see in the reflective light of the snow. Also, wear a bright coat or scarf so that you can be easily seen.

**TIP #3:** Plan ahead. While walking on snow or ice on sidewalks or in parking lots, walk consciously. Instead of looking down, look up and see where your feet will move next to anticipate ice or an uneven surface. Occasionally scan from left to right to ensure you are not in the way of vehicles or other hazards. Never walk where your eyes have not already been.

**TIP #4:** Make sure you can hear. While seeing the environment is important, you also want to be sure you can hear approaching traffic and other noises. Avoid listening to music or engaging in conversation that may prevent you from hearing oncoming traffic or snow removal equipment.

**TIP #5:** Anticipate ice. Be wary of thin sheets of ice that may appear as wet pavement (black ice). Often ice will appear in the morning, in shady spots or where the sun shines during the day and melted snow refreezes at night.

**TIP #6:** Walk steps slowly. Take baby steps. When you are walking down steps, be sure to grip handrails firmly and plant your feet securely on each step. Take one step at a time.

**TIP #7:** Enter a building carefully. When you get to your destination such as school, work, shopping center, etc., be sure to look at the floor as you enter the building. The floor may be wet with melted snow and ice.

**TIP #8:** Be careful when you shift your weight. When stepping off a curb or getting into a car, be careful since shifting your weight may cause an imbalance and result in a fall.

**TIP #9:** Avoid taking shortcuts. Shortcuts are a good idea if you are in a hurry but may be a bad idea if there is snow and ice on the ground. A shortcut path may be treacherous because it is likely to be located where snow and ice removal is not possible.

**TIP #10:** Look up. Be careful about what you walk under. Injuries also can result from falling snow/ice as it blows, melts, or breaks away from awnings, buildings, etc. Following these tips will help ensure that you survive the snow and ice season safely.



## SNOW REMOVAL TIPS

With really big snow storms – and even everyday, run-of-the-mill snowfalls – comes a risk of death by shoveling. Nationwide, snow shoveling is responsible for thousands of injuries and as many as 100 deaths each year. So, why so many deaths? Shoveling snow is just another household chore, right?

Not really, says the American Heart Association. While most people won't have a problem, shoveling snow can put some people at risk of heart attack. Sudden exertion, like moving hundreds of pounds of snow after being sedentary for several months, can put a big strain on the heart. Pushing a heavy snow blower also can cause injury.

And, there's the cold factor. Cold weather can increase heart rate and blood pressure. It can make blood clot more easily and constrict arteries, which decreases blood supply. This is true even in healthy people. Individuals over the age of 40 or who are relatively inactive as well as those with medical conditions should be particularly careful.

The National Safety Council recommends the following tips to shovel safely:

- ⇒ Do not shovel after eating or while smoking
- ⇒ Take it slow and stretch out before you begin
- ⇒ Shovel only fresh, powdery snow; it's lighter
- ⇒ Push the snow rather than lifting it
- ⇒ If you do lift it, use a small shovel or only partially fill the shovel
- ⇒ Lift with your legs, not your back
- ⇒ Do not work to the point of exhaustion
- ⇒ Know the signs of a heart attack, and stop immediately and call 911 if you're experiencing any of them; every minute counts

Don't pick up that shovel without a doctor's permission if you have a history of heart disease or other medical condition. A clear driveway is not worth your life.

## SAFETY TIPS OF THE MONTH

To avoid carbon monoxide poisoning:

- ⇒ Have your furnace, water heater and any other gas or coal-burning appliances serviced by a qualified technician every year
- ⇒ Do not use portable flameless chemical heaters indoors
- ⇒ Have your chimney checked and cleaned every year, and make sure your fireplace damper is open before lighting a fire and well after the fire is extinguished
- ⇒ Never use a gas oven for heating your home
- ⇒ Never use a generator inside your home, basement or garage or less than 20 feet from any window, door or vent; fatal levels of carbon monoxide can be produced in just minutes, even if doors and windows are open
- ⇒ Never run a car in a garage that is attached to a house, even with the garage door open; always open the door to a detached garage to let in fresh air when you run a car inside

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**RIDDLES OF THE MONTH ANSWERS**

- 1) Because he wanted to start the year off in a cool way.
- 2) Heat!! It's easy to catch cold.
- 3) You will B flat if you don't C sharp!
- 4) Because it's too far to walk!
- 5) Lighten up!!

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## QUOTATION OF THE MONTH

"You have to decide what your highest priorities are and have the courage - pleasantly, smilingly, nonapologetically - to say 'no' to other things. And the way to do that is by having a bigger 'yes' burning inside."

Stephen Covey (1932 - 2012)  
American educator, author, businessman and keynote speaker

## WHAT DO PEOPLE RESOLVE TO CHANGE IN JANUARY?

37% EAT HEALTHIER

37% GET MORE EXERCISE

24% TAKE BETTER CARE OF THEMSELVES

18% READ MORE

15% MAKE NEW FRIENDS

