

Keeping Minnesota *Ready*



TUESDAY – OUTDOOR WINTER SAFETY

GENERAL PREPAREDNESS AND SAFETY

- Make a plan.** Winter weather can have unpredictable consequences. What will you and your family do if you're separated during an unplanned event, like a blizzard or a power outage?
- Make a kit.** Do you have enough reserve supplies on hand to keep yourself and your family warm and safe for an extended time without electricity, heat or access to markets or services? Do you know what your emergency needs would be — and can everyone access those items quickly, under stress?
- Stay informed.** Make sure you have access to information — even if the power is out. Get a battery powered TV, radio or NOAA weather radio. Keep extra batteries handy. If you use a cell phone, be sure you have a vehicle charger.

For Adults

- Take it easy.** Cold puts extra strain on your heart. Heavy exertion such as shoveling snow, clearing debris or pushing a car can increase the risk of heart attack.
- Don't overheat.** Dress warmly, but peel layers as necessary to stay comfortable.
- Slow down.** Rest frequently to avoid overexertion when working outdoors. If you feel chest pain, stop. Seek help immediately.
- Stay hydrated.** Drink plenty of water before and while you are working.
- Stay alert.** Know the signs of **frostbite** and **hypothermia**. Warm extremities frequently.



For Kids

- Stay inside.** During snowstorms, blowing snow and cold can make it hard to see and easy to get lost — even close to home. Wait until the storm is gone to go outside.
- Dress right.** When going out to play *after* a storm, dress in snowsuits or layers of clothing, waterproof coat and boots, mittens or gloves and a hat. Avoid cotton clothing or socks as they can soak up water and offer little warmth.
- Wear a hat.** Body heat is lost through the head, so always wear a hat or hood. Cover your ears, too. They are easily subject to frostbite.
- Wear gloves.** Mittens are even better than gloves, because fingers maintain more warmth when they touch each other.
- Use a scarf.** Keep your neck warm. A scarf can also be worn over your mouth to help protect your lungs from extremely cold air.
- Warm up.** Go inside often for warm-up breaks. Long periods of exposure to severe cold and wind increase the risk of frostbite or hypothermia. If you start to shiver a lot or get very tired, or if skin turns numb or pale on your nose, fingers, toes or earlobes, go inside right away and tell an adult!
- Stay near adults.** Always play near home or where there are adults nearby who can help you. Even familiar places can look different in winter, so don't get lost.
- Stay away from streets and snowplows.** Plows can't slow down or turn quickly, and the snow and salt they throw is dirty and can hurt you. Cars may be sliding; they could hit you if you're in the street.
- Stay off of ice.** Unless a lake or pond has been checked by an adult for thickness and safety, don't go out on the ice.

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WINTER SAFETY CHECKLIST — FAMILIES AND CHILDREN

PETS AND ANIMALS

- Provide a shelter.** Create a place where your animals can be comfortable in severe winter weather. Make sure any outbuilding that houses or shelters animals can withstand wind, heavy snow and ice.
- Bring pets indoors; shelter livestock** from wind, snow, ice and rain. Grazing animals need access to a protected supply of food and non-frozen water.



PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES OR OTHER FUNCTIONAL NEEDS

- Make a plan.** For elderly people and those dependent on assistance or medical equipment, make plans *now* to ensure their needs will be met if winter weather results in power outages, makes communication difficult or prevents personal contact.
- Make a kit.** Stock an emergency kit including a flashlight and extra batteries, extra blankets, a battery-operated radio with fresh batteries, bottled water, non-perishable foods, extra essential medicines and other necessities.
- Have backup power.** If a standby generator or another alternate power source is used, be sure it is functioning properly and that a trained person operates it. Be aware of carbon monoxide produced by generators. NEVER use them in enclosed spaces — even garages.
- Notify others.** Plan with others who could help, such as nearby neighbors, relatives or friends. Exchange phone numbers and always have someone check in after a severe storm or power outage.
- Notify utilities.** Register as a special-needs individual with the local utility to become a priority customer during blackouts and emergencies. Do this *before* weather strikes. Do the same with any special support organizations you're involved with.
- Notify authorities.** Also inform the county or city Office of Emergency Management and the Police or Fire Department that there is a special-needs resident at your address.

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WINTER SAFETY CHECKLIST — OUTDOOR SPORTS AND ACTIVITIES:

WINTER ACTIVITIES IN GENERAL

- Check the weather forecasts. Winter weather can change quickly, so be prepared for anything. Carry backup clothing and supplies.
- Use the proper equipment. Be sure everything is in proper working condition before leaving home.
- Wear the proper attire. Use clothing and gear designed for the activity. Don't wear loose items that can be snagged or caught in equipment or machinery.
- Wear a helmet designed specifically for the activity.
- Stay focused; commit 100 percent of your attention on the activity and the terrain you are on. Rest when you are tired. Hydrate often.
- Avoid alcohol. Don't drink before or during any outdoor activity. Alcohol cools the blood and decreases body temperature. In cold weather conditions, alcohol can speed the process of frostbite or hypothermia. It increases fatigue and causes impaired judgment.

Snowmobiling

- Slow down. Speed is a factor in nearly all fatal snowmobiling accidents. Allow ample reaction time for any situation. Drive at moderate speeds — and drive defensively, especially after sunset.
- Don't drink and drive. A snowmobile is a powerful motor vehicle, like any other. Drive responsibly.
- Carry an emergency kit. Your kit should include an emergency blanket, first-aid, flashlight, knife, compass, map, whistle, and waterproof matches. It's also wise to carry water and food.
- Dress appropriately. Always wear a helmet with goggles or a face shield. Wear layers of water-repellent clothing with no loose ends that might catch or tangle in equipment or machinery.
- Stay on marked trails. Where allowed, stay on the right shoulder of the road. Watch for fences, tree stumps and stretched wire that may be concealed by snow.
- Avoid traveling across bodies of water when you are uncertain of ice thickness or water currents. Changing weather can affect the thickness and strength of ice on lakes and ponds; snow cover, for instance, can act as a blanket and prevent thick, strong ice from forming.
- Have a map or GPS. Know where you are and where you are going. Keep a charged cell phone handy.
- Never travel alone. Most snowmobile accidents result in personal injury. The most dangerous situations occur when a person is injured and alone. If you must travel alone, tell someone your destination, planned route, and when you will arrive or return.

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WINTER SAFETY CHECKLIST - OUTDOOR SPORTS AND ACTIVITIES:

Skiing and snowboarding

- Stay on runs that are appropriate for your level of ability. Ski-run ratings can vary dramatically by area.
- Ski or snowboard in control at all times; maintain the ability to stop to avoid people or objects.
- Obey all posted signs and warnings. Do not cross ski area boundary lines.
- Do not ski or snowboard alone. Stay where others can see you in case you need assistance.
- Wear a helmet. Most ski areas require them; some rent them. Use goggles rather than sunglasses.
- Report safety hazards. Alert the local ski patrol about any dangerous activity or hazards.
- Take breaks, stay well hydrated and don't forget to eat. Avoid alcohol. Don't overdo it.

Sledding

- Never use streets or roads unless they are blocked off from traffic.
- Never sled on icy hills. You can lose control easily.
- Avoid big snow bumps or anything that can cause a sled to become airborne.
- Avoid sledding directly into wooded areas, onto ice or into water.
- Be aware of sledders at the bottom and those returning up the hill. Wait until the bottom of the run is clear before starting.

Ice skating on ponds or lakes

- Skate in areas that have been approved and posted for ice skating.
- Avoid skating alone; stay where others can see you. Children should never skate unsupervised by adults.
- Remember that ice thickness is never consistent on lakes and ponds, and always beware of thin areas.
- Avoid cracks, seams, pressure ridges, slushy areas and darker areas that signify thinner ice. If the ice doesn't look safe — it probably isn't.
- Never skate after dark in unlighted areas.

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FROSTBITE AND HYPOTHERMIA AWARENESS:

Frostbite:

Frostbite is the freezing of skin and extremities on the body. The nose, cheeks, ears, fingers, and toes (your extremities) are most commonly affected. Everyone is susceptible, even people who have been living in cold climates for most of their lives. Signals of frostbite:

- In superficial frostbite, burning, numbness, tingling, itching, or cold sensations in the affected areas. The regions appear white and frozen, is cold to the touch, or is discolored (flushed, white or gray, yellow or blue).
- In deep frostbite, there is an initial decrease in sensation that is eventually completely lost. Swelling and blood-filled blisters are noted over white or yellowish skin that looks waxy and turns a purplish blue as it rewarms. The area is hard, has no resistance when pressed on, and may even appear blackened and dead.

What to do for frostbite:

- Get the person to a warm place – a building, shelter or warm vehicle, as soon as possible and then seek immediate medical help or call 9-1-1.
- Softly handle or warm the area gently; never rub the affected area.
- Gently warm up by slowly soaking the affected area in luke warm water (100–105 degrees F) until it appears red and feels warm. Do not expose directly or close to a fire.
- Loosely bandage the area with dry, sterile dressings.
- If the person's fingers or toes are frostbitten, place dry, sterile gauze between them to keep them separated.
- Avoid breaking any blisters.
- Do not allow the affected area to refreeze.

Hypothermia:

In very cold weather, a person's body can lose heat faster than they can produce it. The result is hypothermia, or abnormally low body temperature. It can make a person sleepy, confused and clumsy. Because it happens gradually and affects one's thinking and may not be immediately recognized. That makes it especially dangerous. A body temperature below 95° F is a medical emergency and can lead to death if not treated promptly.

Anyone who spends much time outdoors in cold weather can get hypothermia. One can also get it from being cold and wet, or in cold water for too long. Babies and elderly people are especially at risk. Babies can get it just from sleeping exposed in a cold room.

Signals of hypothermia include: shivering, numbness, glassy stare; apathy, weakness, impaired judgment, incoherent speech; loss of consciousness.

What to do for hypothermia:

- Get the person to a warm place – a building, shelter or warm vehicle, as soon as possible and then seek immediate medical help or call 9-1-1.
- Remove any wet clothing and dry the person.
- Warm the person slowly by wrapping in blankets or by putting dry clothing on the person. Hot water bottles and chemical hot packs may be used when first wrapped in a towel or blanket before applying. Use your own body as a heat source if necessary.
- Do not warm the person too quickly, such as by immersing him or her in warm water or close exposure to a fire. Rapid warming may cause dangerous heart arrhythmias. Warm the core first (trunk, abdomen), not the extremities (hands, feet). This is important to mention because most people will try to warm hands and feet first and that can cause shock
- Monitor breathing and circulation.
- Give rescue breathing and CPR if needed.

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THE SCOOP ABOUT SNOW SHOVELING – FROM MINNESOTA SAFETY COUNCIL

Facts

While shoveling snow can be good exercise, it can also be deadly for optimistic shovelers who take on more than they can handle. The Minnesota Safety Council offers the following tips to help you get a handle on safe shoveling.

Safe Behavior

- Individuals over the age of 40, or those who are relatively inactive, should be especially careful. If you have a history of heart trouble, check with your doctor before shoveling.
- Avoid shoveling after eating or while smoking.
- Take it easy. Snow shoveling is a weight-lifting exercise that raises your heart rate and blood pressure. Warm up before starting the job and stretch both before and after shoveling.
- If possible, shovel only fresh snow — it is easier to shovel than wet, packed-down snow.
- Push the snow forward rather than lifting it out of the way; pick up only small amounts when needed. Your back will thank you.
- As with any lifting activity, use your legs, not your back. Legs should be bent and back straight. Bend and "sit" into the movement, allowing large muscle groups to do most of the work.
- Never work to the point of exhaustion. Take frequent breaks. If your chest feels tight, stop immediately.
- Dress as you would for any outdoor activity. Dressing in layers is best. Take extra precautions to keep hands and feet warm.

