

## Winter and Holiday Safety

### General



Taking preventive action is your best defense against having to deal with extreme cold-weather conditions. By preparing your home and car in advance for winter emergencies, and by observing safety precautions during times of extremely cold weather, you can reduce the risk of weather-related health problems.

- Listen to weather forecasts.
  - Check your emergency supplies.
  - Bring your pets indoors during extreme cold.
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- Have your chimney or flue inspected each year.
  - Install a smoke detector and a battery-operated carbon monoxide detector. Test the batteries each month, and replace them at least yearly.
  - Install storm windows or cover windows with plastic from the inside.
  - Insulate any water lines that run along outer walls (water will be less likely to freeze).
  - Install an easy-to-read outdoor thermometer.

### Food and Safety Checklist

Have a week's worth of food and safety supplies. If you live far from other people, have more supplies on hand. Some items that are critical include:

- Drinking water
- Canned/no-cook food
- Non-electric can opener
- Baby food and formula
- Prescription drugs, other medicine
- First-aid kit
- "Ice Melt" for walkways
- Bag of sand for traction on walkways
- Flashlight and extra batteries

### Water Checklist

- Keep a water supply. Extreme cold can cause water pipes to freeze and sometimes break.
- Leave all water taps slightly open so they drip continuously.
- Keep the indoor temperature warm.
- Allow more heated air near pipes by opening cabinet doors under sinks.
- If pipes do freeze, thaw the pipes slowly with warm air from an electric hair dryer, not a torch.

## Safe Winter Travel



Whether you are traveling on business or personal time, you can protect yourself and your passengers with a little advance preparation.

### Travel Emergency Checklist

- Prepare your car with emergency supplies.
- Dress warmly and stay dry.
- Wear a hat, scarf, and mittens.
- Avoid frostbite.
- If you have to do heavy outdoor chores, dress warmly and work slowly.
- Avoid walking on ice or getting wet.
- Notify friends and family where you will be before you go hiking, camping, or skiing.
- Avoid traveling on ice-covered roads, overpasses, and bridges if at all possible.
- If you are stranded, it is safest to stay in your car but keep the exhaust pipe clear of snow.
- Check out the “Winter Survival App” for your smart phone. It allows addition of personal emergency numbers and provides important survival tips for stranded motorists.

### Here are some supplies to consider carrying in your vehicle (s):

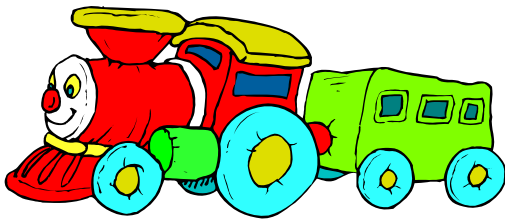
- Cell phone; portable charger; extra batteries
- Shovel
- Windshield scraper
- Battery-powered radio (and extra batteries)
- Flashlight (and extra batteries)
- Water
- Snack food
- Extra hats, coats, mittens and blankets
- Chains or rope
- Tire chains
- Canned compressed air with sealant (tire repair)
- Road salt and sand
- Booster cables
- Emergency flares
- Bright colored flag; help signs
- First aid kit
- Tool kit
- Road maps
- Compass
- Waterproof matches and a can
- Paper towels

### Prepare Your Car for Winter

Avoid many dangerous winter travel problems by planning ahead. Perform maintenance service on your vehicle as often as the manufacturer recommends. In addition, every fall:

- Service the radiator system, or check the antifreeze with an antifreeze tester. Add antifreeze, as needed.
- Replace windshield-wiper fluid with a wintertime mixture.
- Replace any worn tires, and check the air pressure in the tires.
- During winter, keep the gas tank near full to help avoid ice in the tank and fuel lines.

## Toy Safety



Choking is the most common cause of toy-related deaths. If a toy or part of a toy can pass through a standard toilet paper tube, don't buy it for a child under age 3, or any child who still puts things in her mouth. Toys with small parts intended for children between ages 3 and 6 are required by law to include an explicit choking hazard warning.

### BALLOONS AND SMALL TOYS

Never give young children small balls or balloons. Small balls, balloons and pieces of broken balloons are particularly dangerous, as they can completely block a child's airway. Balls for children under 6 years old must be more than 1.75 inches in diameter. Never give latex balls to children younger than 8 years old. Keep small batteries away from small children. They may contain toxic metals or acid.

### MAGNETIC TOYS

New, powerful small magnets used in most magnetic building toys, toy darts, magnetic jewelry, and other toys can fall out of small toys and look like shiny candy. If a child swallows more than one magnet, the magnets can attract each other in the body (in the stomach and intestines) and cause life-threatening complications. If a child swallows even one magnet, seek immediate medical attention.

### STRANGULATION HAZARDS

Mobiles: Keep mobiles out of the reach of children in cribs and remove them before the baby is five months old or can push him/herself up.

Cords: Remove knobs and beads from cords longer than one foot to prevent the cords from tangling into a dangerous loop.

Drawstrings: Clothing with drawstrings on the hood can get caught on fixed objects like playground equipment and pose a strangulation hazard. Remove drawstrings or discard the item.

### CHEMICALS AND LEAD

Some children's toys and cosmetics may contain lead or other toxic chemicals. While most lead and phthalates are being phased out of toys beginning in 2009, older toys may still contain them. Avoid toys made of PVC plastic which could contain toxic phthalates posing developmental hazards; choose unpainted wooden or cloth toys instead. Avoid products with xylene, toluene, or dibutyl phthalate.

The Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), PIRG and children's health groups have found high levels of lead paint on toys, as well as high levels of lead in vinyl lunchboxes and bibs, and in children's costume jewelry. All lead should be removed from a child's environment, especially lead jewelry and other toys that can be swallowed. To test jewelry for lead, use a home lead tester available at the hardware store, or simply throw costume jewelry made with such heavy metals away.

### ONCE THE GIFTS ARE OPENED:

- Immediately discard plastic wrapping and packaging before they become dangerous play things.
- Keep toys appropriate for older children away from younger siblings.
- Charging batteries should be supervised by adults. Chargers and adapters can pose thermal burn hazards to young children.
- Pay attention to instructions and warnings on battery chargers. Some chargers lack any mechanism to prevent overcharging.

## Candle Fire Safety



- 15,260 - estimated home candle fires each year
- 166 - estimated home candle fire deaths each year
- 1,289 - estimated home candle fire injuries each year
- December is the peak time of year for home candle fires (13% compared to 4% the rest of the year).
- 55% of home candle fires start because the candle is too close to combustible materials.
- 36% of candle fires begin in the bedroom, more than in any other room

With the holidays fast approaching and the increased usage of seasonal decorations, it is important to focus on candle fire safety and prevention. Because the majority of candle fires result from human error and negligence, candle fires and their associated casualties are preventable.

- If possible, avoid using lighted candles. If you must use candles, ensure that they are placed in sturdy metal, glass or ceramic holders in a location where they cannot be easily knocked over.
- Keep candles away from children and pets.
- Be sure to extinguish candles after each use and never leave burning candles unattended.
- Young children and older adults have the highest death risk from candle fires.
- The risk of fatal candle fires appears higher when candles are used for light. (Never have candles in your emergency supplies for light).

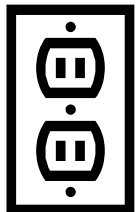
**\*Remember! Candle fires are PREVENTABLE!**

In the event of a fire at home, remember time is the biggest enemy and every second counts! Escape first, and then call for help. Develop a home fire escape plan and practice it frequently with your family. Designate a meeting place outside. Make sure everyone in the family knows two ways to escape from every room.

Never stand up in a fire, always crawl low under the smoke, and try to keep your mouth covered. Never return to a burning building for any reason: it may cost you your life. Finally, having a working smoke alarm dramatically increases your chances of surviving a fire.

[http://www.usfa.fema.gov/downloads/pdf/focus/nov\\_2009\\_candles.pdf](http://www.usfa.fema.gov/downloads/pdf/focus/nov_2009_candles.pdf)

## Generator Safety



The Centers for Disease Control reports that carbon monoxide (CO) exposures and poisonings occur more often during the fall and winter, when people are more likely to use gas furnaces, heaters and generators in their homes. According to CDC statistics, approximately 480 U.S. residents died during 2001-2003 from non-fire-related carbon monoxide poisoning. From 2007-2009 in Oklahoma, 19 people died and 154 were hospitalized for CO poisoning.

- Never use a generator indoors or in enclosed spaces such as garages, crawl spaces, and basements. Open windows and doors may NOT prevent CO from building up when a generator is located in an enclosed space.
- Make sure a generator has 3 to 4 feet of clear space on all sides and above it to ensure adequate ventilation.
- If you or others show symptoms of CO poisoning— dizziness, headaches, nausea, tiredness—get to fresh air immediately and seek medical attention. Do not re-enter the area until it is determined to be safe by trained and properly equipped personnel.

### Hazards Associated with Generators

- Shocks and electrocution from improper use of power or accidentally energizing other electrical systems.
- Carbon monoxide (CO) from a generator's exhaust.
- Fires from improperly refueling a generator or inappropriately storing the fuel for a generator.
- Noise and vibration hazards.
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions and guidelines when using generators.
- Use a generator or other fuel-powered machines outside the home. CO fumes are odorless and can quickly overwhelm you indoors.
- Use the appropriate sized and type power cords to carry the electric load. Overloaded cords can overheat and cause fires.
- Never run cords under rugs or carpets where heat might build up or damage to a cord may go unnoticed.

## *For More Information*

<http://toysafety.mobi/>

<http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/winter/>

<http://www.nws.noaa.gov/om/winter/index.shtml>

<http://www.srh.noaa.gov/oun/?n=safety-winter>

[http://www.usfa.fema.gov/citizens/home\\_fire\\_prev/holiday-seasonal/winter\\_storms.shtm](http://www.usfa.fema.gov/citizens/home_fire_prev/holiday-seasonal/winter_storms.shtm)

<http://www.osha.gov/Publications/3277-10N-05-english-06-27-2007.html>

<http://www.epa.gov/iaq/co.html>



*Have a Safe  
and  
Happy Holiday Season*



The next edition of this newsletter will be available before the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 2012. Send suggested topics to the SSHER Center Coordinator at [pboatright@osrhe.edu](mailto:pboatright@osrhe.edu).

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