

Staying Safe & Warm This Winter

What's the first thing that comes to your mind when you think about winter? Cold? Snow?

How about home heating safety? Carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning? Fall prevention? A lot of us spend our winters shoveling snow, scraping ice and driving on slippery roads, so things like simple winter safety precautions slip our minds.

Below are some tips to ensure your winter is a safe one. Because whether you're shoveling out from another snowstorm, making snow angels or just snuggled inside a warm house with a cup of hot cocoa, anything is preferable to spending time in a hospital.

- Have your fuel-burning appliances (including oil and gas furnaces, gas water heaters, gas ranges and ovens, gas dryers, gas or kerosene space heaters, fireplaces, and wood burning stoves) inspected by a trained professional at the beginning of every heating season. Make certain that the flues and chimneys are connected, in good condition, and not blocked.
- Make sure you have working carbon monoxide (CO) and smoke detectors throughout your home and replace the batteries annually.
- Never use your stove or oven to heat your home. If you're using a space heater, place it on a hard, level, non-flammable surface. Do not put space heaters on rugs or carpets, near bedding or drapes, and keep children and pets away from them.
- If you're going outside, wear layered lightweight clothing to stay warm. Gloves or mittens and a hat will prevent loss of body heat. Covering the mouth will protect your lungs. Wear waterproof, insulated boots to keep your feet warm and dry and to maintain footing in ice and snow.
- If shoveling snow, take frequent breaks and stay hydrated. Avoid overexertion. Use rock salt to melt ice and/or sand to improve traction.
- Keep an emergency supply kit in your home that includes a battery-powered radio with extra batteries, canned food and a manual can opener, flashlights and battery-powered lamps for power failures, and wood for fireplaces.
- Make sure your car is in proper working condition and includes blankets, warm clothing, jumper cables and tools, bottled water, dried fruits and nuts, a first aid kit, a fire extinguisher, flashlights and batteries, a shovel, and ice scraper. And remember to keep the car's gas tank full for emergency use and to keep the fuel line from freezing.