



Winter Safety Tips

From Town of Ossining
Mark E. Busche, Chief of Police

In your home

Prepare early in the season for winter weather. Install a carbon monoxide detector in your home. You can't see or smell this deadly gas. If fuel-burning appliances aren't working properly, the CO emitted can reach dangerous levels. Many of the symptoms of CO poisoning are similar to flu, including headache, fatigue, shortness of breath, nausea and dizziness.

Clean your humidifier at the beginning of every heating season. Follow directions in your owner's manual. The evaporator pad should also be replaced before each heating season. If the water in your area is hard or has high mineral content, you may need to clean or service your humidifier more frequently.

Check the air filter in your furnace or fan coil every three to four weeks. A dirty filter will cause excessive strain on your furnace, air conditioner or heat pump. Replace your filter when necessary or clean it if you have the reusable type. If you have a reusable filter, make sure it's completely dry before you re-install it. The prefilter and collection cells of an electronic air cleaner should be cleaned at least two-or three times per year.

Inspect your furnace's combustion area and vent system before each heating season. If you find dirt, soot or rust, your system may not operate properly or at its peak efficiency. Do not operate your furnace until it is professionally inspected and/or repaired.

Decorations

Use only tree lights that have the "UL" tag attached to it. This means that the lights have been tested by the Underwriters Laboratories and are safe.

However, before you put the lights on the tree, (new or old), check them for broken or cracked sockets, broken or exposed wire and/or any loose connections. If any one of the problems is present, throw the light set away. Damaged lights can shock a person or start a fire.

If you have to use an extension cord, use no more than 3 sets of lights attached to it. Also be sure there are no exposed wires on the floor where someone may trip over them.

Be sure to unplug your lights when you leave home or go to bed.

When decorating the tree, it is a good idea not to decorate the lower limbs with breakable ornaments if small children or pets are in the house. They could be knocked off and break and serious cuts may result.

When decorating the higher limbs, use a step stool or step ladder. Whatever you use, make sure it is steady. Many home accidents occur when people fall off whatever they are standing on.

For fire safety sake, do NOT decorate trees with cotton, paper or other materials that burn readily. Avoid wax candles and/or other types of open flame.

Holiday Home Safety

Up the Chimney with Care:

"Chestnuts roasting on an open fire" sounds like a good Yuletide activity. It could be a very dangerous practice. Every year scores of home fires are started from unscreened fireplaces, from something as small as a spark popping on the carpet. So--

- Have a tight screen on the fireplace, one that completely covers the fireplace opening.
- Choose hardwoods, if possible. Softwoods like pine, and spruce burn up quickly, throwing dangerous sparks and coating the chimney with tars and resins that could easily catch fire at some future time.
- Don't burn a large amount of trash or wrapping paper in the fireplace. Roaring flames can ignite soot and resins clinging to the inside of the chimney and a serious fire could result.

Fire Safety:

A SMOKE DETECTOR CAN SAVE YOUR LIFE. Smoke is the number one killer in fires. Smoke detectors double your chances of surviving a fire in your home. Check your batteries in your smoke detector regularly.

Baby-sitters are called numerous times over the holidays to care for children and aging parents. Show them what to do in case of a fire and make sure they have emergency numbers.

Sixty-five percent of home fires start in the kitchen or in a room where people are cooking. If you don't have a fire extinguisher, you can put out a kitchen grease fire by covering the pan with a heavy lid or with baking soda. Never use water or flour to extinguish a grease fire.

Electric heaters may be used to supplement your heating source during the holidays. Take special care.

- Check for bare wire and broken ends.
- Keep the heater away from materials that might catch on fire.
- Place the heater on a level and secure spot.
- Use a heavy-duty extension cord, if you have to use an extension cord.

Safety with Firearms:

Common experience demands that all firearms should be kept out of reach of children and immature or irresponsible adults.

Unloaded rifles, shotguns, and handguns should at all times be in a rack, cabinet, closet, or drawer that is LOCKED. Likewise, cartridges and shells should be locked away and preferably out of sight.

Party Smart:

Holiday parties and get-togethers will be starting soon as well. Having a designated driver is a good way to ensure that everyone enjoys holiday events. Be especially attentive to other drivers, and don't assume that they've been as conscientious as you have. And always remember to buckle up for safety.

HOLIDAY OR PARTY BUFFETS

A popular way to celebrate holidays or any party occasion is to invite friends and family to a buffet. However, this type of food service where foods are left out for long periods leave the door open for uninvited guests --- bacteria that cause foodborne illness. Festive times for giving and sharing should not include sharing foodborne illness. Here are some tips from the USDA's Meat and Poultry Hotline to help you have a SAFE holiday party.

Foodborne Bacteria

Bacteria are everywhere but a few types especially like to crash parties. *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Clostridium perfringens* and *Listeria monocytogenes* frequent people's hands and steam tables. And unlike microorganisms that cause food to spoil, harmful or pathogenic bacteria cannot be smelled or tasted. Prevention is safe food handling. If illness occurs, however, contact a health professional and describe the symptoms.

Staphylococcus aureus

Staphylococcus ("staph") bacteria are found on our skin, in infected cuts and pimples, and in our noses and throats. They are spread by improper food handling. Prevention includes washing hands and utensils before preparing and handling foods and not letting prepared foods --- particularly cooked and cured meats and cheese and meat salads --- sit at room temperature more than two hours. Thorough cooking destroys "staph" bacteria but staphylococcal enterotoxin is resistant to heat, refrigeration and freezing.

Clostridium perfringens

"Perfringens" is called the "cafeteria germ" because it may be found in foods served in quantity and left for long periods of time on inadequately maintained steam tables or at room temperature. Prevention is to divide large portions of cooked foods such as beef, turkey, gravy, dressing, stews and casseroles into smaller portions for serving and cooling. Keep cooked foods hot or cold, not lukewarm.

Listeria Monocytogenes

Because *Listeria* bacteria multiply, albeit slowly, at refrigeration temperatures, these bacteria can be found in cold foods typically served on buffets. To avoid serving foods containing *Listeria*, follow "keep refrigerated" label directions and carefully observe "sell by" and "use by" dates on

processed products, and thoroughly reheat frozen or refrigerated processed meat and poultry products before consumption.

Safe Food Handling

Always wash your hands before and after handling food. Keep your kitchen, dishes and utensils clean also. Always serve food on clean plates --- not those previously holding raw meat and poultry. Otherwise, bacteria which may have been present in raw meat juices can cross contaminate the food to be served.

Cook Thoroughly

If you are cooking foods ahead of time for your party, be sure to cook foods thoroughly to safe temperatures. Cook fresh roast beef to at least 145o F for medium rare and 160o F for medium doneness. Bake whole poultry to 180o F, poultry breasts to 170o F. Ground turkey and poultry should be cooked to 165o F All other meat, fish and ground red meats should be cooked to 160o F.

Use Small, Shallow Containers

Divide cooked foods into small shallow containers to store in the refrigerator or freezer until serving. This encourages rapid, even cooling. Reheat hot foods to 165o F. Arrange and serve food on several small platters rather than on one large platter. Keep the rest of the food hot in the oven (set at 200o - 250o F) or cold in the refrigerator until serving time. This way foods will be held at a safe temperature for a longer period of time. REPLACE empty platters rather than adding fresh food to a dish that already had food in it. Many people's hands may have been taking food from the dish, which has also been sitting out at room temperature for a while.

The Two Hour Rule

Foods should not sit at room temperature for more than two hours. Keep track of how long foods have been sitting on the buffet table and discard anything there two hours or more.

Keep Hot Foods HOT and Cold Foods COLD

Hot foods should be held at 140o F or warmer. On the buffet table you can keep hot foods hot with chafing dishes, crock pots and warming trays. Cold foods should be held at 40o F or colder. Keep foods cold by nesting dishes in bowls of ice. Otherwise, use small serving trays and replace them often.

Handling Leftovers

When the party's over, discard any foods that sat for two hours or more on the buffet table. Other leftovers can be refrigerated frozen in shallow containers. Leftovers are safe in the refrigerator for four days. In the freezer they are safe indefinitely, but most will have best quality if used within two to four months. Thoroughly reheat leftovers to 165o F.

Holiday Is Time To Keep Yourself Safe

With the euphoria created by the holidays, it is always important to remember that not everyone shares the holiday spirit.

Cars loaded with gifts and left in parking lots can become easy targets for thieves, so remember to lock your vehicle, even when you expect to be in and out of a store quickly. Keep packages in

your trunk and out of sight. Park your car in a well lit, heavily traveled area, and never leave the keys in your vehicle. If you choose to valet park be sure that the contents of your vehicle are secure and not assessable.

For extra security, consider investing in a theft deterrent system for your car. Steering wheel immobilization devices can be purchased for a small price and often may be just enough to discourage a would-be thief. More sophisticated systems can sound an alarm and even disable the vehicle if it is stolen. Even if you don't feel your car is a likely target, don't tempt someone to steal it for its contents.

Outdoor Safety Tips

- Dress in layers with loose-fitting, light-weight articles
- Outer garments should be water-repellent and hooded
- Wear a hat - half your body heat is lost through your head
- Cover as much flesh as possible to avoid frostbite
- Cover your mouth with a scarf to protect your lungs from extreme cold
- Mittens that are snug at the wrist are better than gloves
- Keep your feet dry and warm by wearing appropriate boots
- Try to stay dry

Avoid Overexertion

Strain in the cold and hard labor can cause a heat attack. Sweating can lead to a chill and hypothermia. Avoid shoveling heavy snow, pushing a car or walking in deep snow. If you do shovel, be sure to take frequent breaks indoors.

Frostbite

During extreme wind-chill - exposed flesh can freeze within a few minutes, causing pain, numbness, and discoloration - soak the body part in warm, not hot water, call your doctor immediately.

In your car

- Make sure you always have at least 1/4 tank of gas during the winter months.
- Keep the fluid levels high, including antifreeze and windshield washer fluid.
- When driving, be on the lookout for black ice (ice that isn't visible) and drive slowly and carefully on bridges and overpasses.
- Crack windows 1/2" - 1" to avoid carbon monoxide buildup inside your vehicle.
- Run your car at 10-minute intervals to conserve gasoline.
- Double the normal distance between your vehicle and the next, leaving at least 20 car lengths for emergency stopping.
- Slow down but drive defensively.
- Assemble a winter weather kit, including flashlight, a bag of sand for extra weight when driving in snow and ice, a blanket or extra jacket for warmth, canned food and a can opener, bottled water, boots, mittens and a hat, matches.

Sledding Safety

Keep these tips in mind whenever you plan to sled:

- Always sled in familiar territory.
- Go with a companion.
- Check out the terrain before you sled. Walk up and down the hill to check for rocks or debris or other obstructions.
- Do not sled where there is a drop off or road or stream at the bottom of a hill.
- Make sure you sled a safe distance away from any trees or other potential hazards.
- Let others know when you intend to go sledding so they know your whereabouts and give them an expected time of return.
- Look for posted signs which may indicate whether or not sledding is recommended in an area.
- Wear proper attire. Dress in layers. Wear goggles and gloves and wear a ski mask if possible to protect from wind burn.
- Do not sled when the weather reports warn against wind chill; sledding creates additional wind which can result in frostbite.
- On very steep hills, start your initial sledding further down the hill to allow yourself time to get to know the terrain.
- Do not overcrowd a sled.
- Avoid sledding in a prone stomach position. It is much safer to sled sitting up or lying on your back. Do not sled down a hill head first.
- Do not sled while standing or kneeling.
- Purchase high quality sledding products for long lasting durability.

SUGGESTIONS FOR DRIVING IN WINTER STORM AREAS:

Make sure your car is in good running condition.

Have your vehicle equipped with Snow Tires or CHAINS.

Take another person with you if possible.

Make sure someone knows where you are going, your approximate schedule, and your estimated time of arrival.

Have an emergency "WINTER STORM KIT" in your car.

Travel by daylight and use major highways whenever possible.

Keep car radio tuned for local weather information and advice.

Drive with all possible caution, not to FAST for conditions.

Do not be daring and FOOLHARDY, know when to turn back or seek help.

Above all, keep CALM if you get in trouble.

WINTER STORM KIT:

Container of sand
Shovel
Jumper cables
Tow chains or rope
Windshield scraper
Flashlight
Heavy gloves and woolen socks
Extra clothing, (heavy coat with hood)
Warm blanket
First Aid Kit

KEEP CALM IF YOU GET IN TROUBLE

If your car breaks down, stalls, or you get lost, whatever you do, **DO NOT PANIC**. Think the problem through, decide the safest and best thing to do, and then do it slowly and carefully.

If you are on a well-traveled road, indicate you are in trouble by: (1) turning on your emergency flasher lights, or (2) raise the hood of your car, or (3) hang a cloth from the radio aerial or car window.

Then stay in your car and wait for help to come. Use the blanket in your "WINTER STORM KIT" to keep you warm. If you must turn your engine on to keep warm, remember to open a window enough to provide ventilation to protect you from carbon monoxide poisoning.

WHEREVER you are, if there is no house or other source of help in sight, **DO NOT** leave your car to search for help: you may become confused and/or lost.

Good Driving Tips for Bad Weather Days

Bad weather is one of life's little realities. Driving in it is one of life's big frustrations. These tips will help ease your way through ice, snow, sleet, rain or fog.

No matter what type of driving conditions exist, the key to avoiding skids, loss of control and accidents is to reduce your speed and increase your following distance.

Avoiding Skids:

Skidding is caused by hard acceleration or braking, speed too fast for conditions, and quick jerky movements of the steering wheel.

The most important thing to remember when you feel yourself entering a skid, is look, and steer where you want to go. Shifting to neutral then slowing down gradually, rather than slamming on your brakes, is the second most important.

Gentle pressure on the accelerator pedal when starting (for example, at a red light) is the best method for retaining traction and avoiding skids. If your wheels start to spin, let up on the accelerator until traction returns.

Loss of Control:

- Develop smooth driving skills. Unsteady steering, heavy "panic" breaking and quick acceleration can cause you to skid, spin and lose control.
- In snowy or icy conditions, minimize brake use, however, if speed reduction is necessary, slowly depress the brake pedal.
- Normally, the minimum safe following distance between cars is two to three seconds. But this distance should be increased to eight to ten seconds when driving on icy, slippery surfaces.

Anticipate:

- Another recommendation for driving in winter weather is to anticipate ice patches along an otherwise clear roadway. As temperatures drop from day into night, many shaded spots, bridges, overpasses and intersections are prone to slippery, icy conditions.
- Anticipate these ice patches, look far ahead (20 to 30 seconds) so changes can be anticipated and made gradually and smoothly.

Visibility:

- When driving while poor visibility conditions persist, always keep your lights on. Besides helping you see, your lights will help you be seen.

Buckle up:

- Wear your seat belt and have everyone else in your car to the same. Seat belts are the most important safety device in your car.
- If you must drive when conditions are not ideal, listen to the local traffic and road condition reports and choose the best route to make it to your destination.

Don't Drink and Drive! Holidays and Highways Can Be Deadly Combination

As the holidays approach each year, public service announcements, billboards and other media resound with warnings of drinking and driving.

Sadly, some motorists still choose to risk their lives and the lives of others by driving while intoxicated.

Nationally, alcohol is a factor in about 40% of the 40,000 fatalities that occur each year.

With a Blood Alcohol Content of just .05, motorists have the feeling of relaxation, sedation or euphoria and experience increased difficulty in performing motor skills. Most importantly, driving ability and judgment are impaired.

In New York, a blood alcohol content of .10 means you are legally intoxicated.

If hosting a holiday party that will include alcohol, consider the following tips to help ensure the safety of your driving guests, as well as motorists who may encounter them on the highways.

- Give your guests an option. Serve soft drinks, coffee or other nonalcoholic beverages.
- Let your guests get their own drinks. Don't push them into drinking alcohol.
- Offer plenty of heavy snacks and food, particularly nearing the end of the party before people leave.
- If a guest isn't in a condition to drive, find them a designated driver, call a taxi for them or insist that the person sleep overnight.
- Only time (not coffee, a cold shower or fresh air) will minimize the affects of alcohol on our bodies and brains.

Extreme Cold

Extreme cold often accompanies a winter storm or is left in its wake. Prolonged exposure to the cold can cause frostbite or hypothermia and become life-threatening. Infants and elderly people are most susceptible.

When CAUGHT in a Winter Storm

OUTSIDE

Find shelter:

- try to stay dry
- cover all exposed parts of the body.

No shelter:

- prepare a lean-to, wind-break, or snow cave for protection from the wind.
- build a fire for heat and to attract attention.
- place rocks around the fire to absorb and reflect heat.

Do not eat snow: It will lower your body temperature. Melt it first.

IN A CAR OR TRUCK

Stay in your car or truck. Disorientation occurs quickly in wind-driven snow and cold.

Run the motor about ten minutes each hour for heat:

- open the window a little for fresh air to avoid carbon monoxide poisoning.
- make sure the exhaust pipe is not blocked.

Make yourself visible to rescuers:

- turn on the dome light at night when running engine.
- tie a colored cloth (preferably red) to your antenna or door.
- raise the hood indicating trouble after snow stops falling.

Exercise from time to time by vigorously moving arms, legs, fingers, and toes to keep blood circulating and to keep warm.

AT HOME OR IN A BUILDING

Stay inside. When using ALTERNATIVE HEAT from a fireplace, wood stove, space heater, etc.:

- use fire safeguards.
- properly ventilate.

No heat:

- close off unneeded rooms.
- stuff towels or rags in cracks under doors.

- cover windows at night.

Eat and drink. Food provides the body with energy for producing its own heat. Keep the body replenished with fluids to prevent dehydration.

Wear layers of loose-fitting, lightweight, warm clothing. Remove layers to avoid overheating, perspiration, and subsequent chill.

KEEP AHEAD OF THE STORM by listening to NOAA Weather Radio, commercial radio, and television for the latest winter storm watches, warnings, and advisories.

What to Listen For...

WINTER STORM WATCH:

Severe winter conditions, such as heavy snow and/or ice, are possible within the next day or two. Prepare now!

WINTER STORM WARNING:

Severe winter conditions have begun or are about to begin in your area. Stay indoors!

BLIZZARD WARNING:

Snow and strong winds will combine to produce a blinding snow (near zero visibility), deep drifts, and life-threatening wind chill. Seek refuge immediately!

WINTER WEATHER ADVISORY:

Winter weather conditions are expected to cause significant inconveniences and may be hazardous. If caution is exercised, these situations should not become life-threatening. The greatest hazard is often to motorists.

FROST/FREEZE WARNING:

Below freezing temperatures are expected and may cause significant damage to plants, crops, or fruit trees. In areas unaccustomed to freezing temperatures, people who have homes without heat need to take added precautions.

BE PREPARED... Before the Storm Strikes

At home and at work:

Primary concerns are the potential loss of heat, power, telephone service, and a shortage of supplies if storm conditions continue for more than a day.

Have available:

- Flashlight and extra batteries.
- Battery-powered NOAA Weather Radio and portable radio to receive emergency information. These may be your only links to the outside.
- Extra food and water. High energy food, such as dried fruit or candy, and food requiring no cooking or refrigeration is best.
- Extra medicine and baby items.
- First-aid supplies.
- Heating fuel. Fuel carriers may not reach you for days after a severe winter storm.
- Emergency heating source, such as a fireplace, wood stove, space heater, etc.

- Learn to use properly to prevent a fire.
- Have proper ventilation.
- Fire extinguisher and smoke detector.
 - Test units regularly to ensure they are working properly.

In cars and trucks:

Plan your travel and check the latest weather reports to avoid the storm!

- Fully check and winterize your vehicle before the winter season begins.
- Carry a WINTER STORM SURVIVAL KIT:
 - blankets/sleeping bags;
 - flashlight with extra batteries;
 - first-aid kit;
 - knife;
 - high-calorie, non-perishable food;
 - extra clothing to keep dry;
 - a large empty can and plastic cover with tissues and paper towels for sanitary purposes;
 - a smaller can and water-proof matches to melt snow for drinking water;
 - sack of sand (or cat litter);
 - shovel;
 - windshield scraper and brush;
 - tool kit;
 - tow rope;
 - booster cables;
 - water container;
 - compass and road maps.
- Keep your gas tank near full to avoid ice in the tank and fuel lines.
- Try not to travel alone.
- Let someone know your timetable and primary and alternate routes.

FAMILY DISASTER PLAN :

Families should be prepared for all hazards that affect their area and themselves. NOAA's National Weather Service, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and the American Red Cross urge each family to develop a family disaster plan. Where will your family be when disaster strikes? They could be anywhere at work, at school, or in the car. How will you find each other? Will you know if your children are safe? Disasters may force you to evacuate your neighborhood or confine you to your home. What would you do if basic services - water, gas, electricity or telephones - were cut off?

Follow these basic steps to develop a family disaster plan:

Gather information about hazards. Contact your local National Weather Service office, emergency management office or civil defense office, and American Red Cross chapter. Find out what type of disasters could occur and how you should respond.

Meet with your family to create a plan. Discuss the information you have gathered. Pick two places to meet: a spot right outside your home for an emergency, such as fire, and a place away from your neighborhood in case you can't return home. Choose an out-of-state friend as your "family check-in contact" for everyone to call if the family gets separated. Discuss what you would do if advised to evacuate.

Implement your plan.

- Post emergency telephone numbers by phones;
- Install safety features in your house, such as smoke detectors and fire extinguishers,
- Inspect your home for potential hazards (such as items that can move, fall, break, or catch fire) and correct them;
- Have your family learn basic safety measures, such as CPR and first aid; how to use a fire extinguisher; and how and when to turn off water, gas, and electricity in your home;
- Teach children how and when to call 911 or your local Emergency Medical Services number;
- (6) Keep enough supplies in your home to meet your needs for at least three days. Assemble a disaster supplies kit with items you may need in case of an evacuation. Store these supplies in sturdy, easy-to-carry containers, such as backpacks or duffel bags. Keep important family documents in a waterproof container. Keep a smaller disaster supplies kit in the trunk of your car.

A DISASTER SUPPLIES KIT SHOULD INCLUDE:

- A 3-day supply of water (one gallon per person per day)
- food that won't spoil
- one change of clothing and footwear per person
- one blanket or sleeping bag per person
- a first-aid kit, including prescription medicines
- emergency tools,
- battery-powered NOAA Weather Radio and a portable radio
- flashlight, and plenty of extra batteries
- extra set of car keys
- cash
- special items for infant, elderly, or disabled family member.

Practice and maintain your plan. Ask questions to make sure your family remembers meeting places, phone numbers, and safety rules. Conduct drills. Test your smoke detectors monthly and change the batteries at least once a year. Test and recharge your fire extinguisher(s) according to manufacturer's instructions. Replace stored water and food every six months.

Have a Happy Holiday and a safe New Year !!!!

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