



# Winter Injury Prevention

## Winter Walking Safety—Prevent Falls

- Concentrate on what you are doing while you are doing it.
- Be aware of your surroundings - Always watch for hazards and dangers such as ice on steps, sidewalks, and pathways, snow and water puddles.
- Walk flat-footed.
- Don't rush. Move at a speed that feels comfortable and shorten the length of your step. Give yourself lots of time to get where you are going.
- Keep your weight over your feet; avoid reaching or twisting when walking. Keep one hand free for your balance.
- Be especially careful getting on and off buses and getting in and out of cars.
- Wear boots with traction and a low wide heel - not smooth leather soles or high heels.
- If you have them, wear ice grippers on footwear to help prevent falls on ice and snow. Make sure you can attach and remove them from your boots before purchasing.
- Outdoor stairs and entrances need to be sanded or salted during the winter and free of ice and snow.

## Winter Driving—Prevent Crashes

- Before you drive, clean all snow and ice off your windows, headlights and taillights. Be sure your windshield wipers and defroster are working.
- When driving on snow or ice, start slowly and smoothly. If you start to spin, try clearing a path by driving backwards and forwards a few times. If that does not help, spread some abrasive material like salt, sand or cat litter around your wheels. Your wheels may throw up gravel or ice and cause an injury.
- Try to get the feel for the road. Gently brake while driving to see how slippery the road is and then set your speed for the road conditions.
- Leave a safe distance between you and the vehicle ahead of you.
- If you want to slow down or stop, apply the brakes gently and smoothly. Slamming on your brakes will cause you to skid. On slippery surfaces, pump the brakes by gently pushing down and letting up on them several times. If your vehicle is equipped with anti-lock brakes refer to the owner's manual.
- Beware of bridges and overpasses; they will freeze and become slippery before other parts of the road. Even on clear roads, icy patches may still exist.
- Do not use your four wheel drive on ice! Four wheel drives can easily overturn on ice.
- **If you hit an icy patch, take your foot OFF the accelerator.** If you feel you must touch your brakes, first shift your car into neutral. This will help you slow or stop more quickly on slick pavement.

## **Downed Power Lines—Prevent Electrocutation**

- If you find a downed power line, assume that it is "live" and dangerous. Stay away and keep others away as well. Call Kansas City Power & Light toll free at 1-888-LIGHT-KC (1-888-544-4852) or your local utility to report it.
- Be watchful for fallen power lines which have contacted metal fences, backyard gym sets and other structures. They can become conductors of electricity and the slightest touch can injure or even kill. Stay away from them.
- If a power line falls on your vehicle, do not attempt to escape. Use your cell phone to call for help or wait for help to arrive. If you must escape, jump from the vehicle being careful to avoid touching the vehicle and the ground at the same time.
- If you have a generator, plug appliances directly into it and turn the main breaker in your fuse box "off." Back up generation fed directly into your household circuits can injure linemen working to restore your service.
- Finally, before you begin clearing away fallen trees and debris, make sure no fallen lines are hidden underneath.

## **Physical Exertion—Prevent Heart Attacks or Strokes**

More people die in winter cold waves than in any other weather hazards. Cold weather itself -- without any exercise -- puts an extra strain on your heart. Heavy exertion -- like shoveling snow, pushing a car, or even walking fast in cold weather--increases your chances for a heart attack or stroke. In cold weather, also watch for signs of hypothermia, which is when the body gets too cold, especially in elderly people.