

W I N T E R S A F E T Y

Portage Prepares

Helping Portage County Citizens prepare for emergencies and disasters.



Winter Health and Safety Tips

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Winter's various dangers to people can occur suddenly, like a heart attack while shoveling snow, or slow and stealthily like carbon monoxide poisoning. Hypothermia and frostbite are always a concern, especially for the elderly and for people with chronic health conditions. The Ohio Department of Health and the Ohio Department of Aging offer these safety tips to help keep you and your family safe this winter season.



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Snow Shoveling Safety

Keep walkways around the home clear of snow and ice. Snow shoveling can cause serious injuries or death to people who are elderly, have chronic health problems or are not used to strenuous activity. If you are in one of these categories, you may want to use a snow blower or hire a snow removal service.

If you choose to do this heavy work yourself, remember that your body may tire quicker in the cold. Do not overextend yourself. Take short breaks in between shoveling. Exhaustion can make the body more susceptible to cold injuries.

- Wear sturdy shoes with rugged soles to help prevent slips and falls.
- Never smoke while shoveling. Tobacco smoke constricts blood vessels just as cold air does; the combination could be dangerous.
- If you become short of breath while shoveling, stop and rest. If you feel pain or tightness in your chest, become dizzy, faint or start sweating heavily, stop immediately and call for help.
- Have a partner monitor your progress and share the workload. If you have a heart attack, your partner can call for help and if trained, perform cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) until help arrives.
- Use a sturdy, lightweight shovel to push the snow out of the way. If you must lift the snow, take small scoops. A shovel-full of dry snow can weigh about four pounds; wet snow can weigh significantly more.
- Warm up before shoveling by walking and stretching your arms and legs for a few minutes. Warm muscles are less likely to be injured and work more efficiently.
- If you use a snow blower, keep in mind that pushing a snow blower through heavy, packed snow can present a health risk.





Avoiding Slips and Falls

Winter in Ohio can be unpredictable. Snow, sleet and icy roads and walkways can make getting around not only inconvenient, but dangerous. Use these simple precautions to decrease your risk of falling:

- Take it slow. Allow extra time to get places in the winter. Try to avoid carrying heavy packages while walking on ice or snow – it can leave you feeling unbalanced.
- Keep rock salt, sand and a shovel available. Rock salt is a chemical de-icing compound that reduces the risk of slipping.
- Wear appropriate footwear. Winter boots provide more traction than tennis or dress shoes. Carry a cell phone when walking in inclement weather.
- Ask for help. If you have to walk across an icy sidewalk or parking lot, try to find a steady arm to lean on. Most people will gladly help an older person navigate a slippery walkway.
- Continue your exercise regimen indoors, if possible.

