Snow and Ice Removal

Clear out safely

In many parts of the United States, February means snow and ice. In these areas, removing these treacherous elements from vehicles, steps, walkways, and roadways is crucial to getting around safely. The very removal of snow and ice itself can be very hazardous, however.

Potential hazards include:
- Equipment hazards
- Overexertion
- Slips, trips, and falls
- Poor visibility
- Back injuries
- Fatigue
- Noise
- Cold

Protect yourself from these hazards by taking these precautions:
- Assess conditions.
- Inspect equipment.
- Use appropriate personal protective equipment, which may include:
  - Eye protection
  - Gloves
  - Hearing protection
  - Safety shoes
  - Warm clothing
  - Head protection

If you use a snowplow:
- Watch out for vehicles and pedestrians.
- Maintain good steering control.
- Approach snow piles at a safe speed.
- Look out for obstacles.
- Know your drop point for the plowed snow.

If you use a snowblower:
- Clear the area of debris.
- Direct snow away from people and vehicles.
- Don’t exceed the blower’s capacity.
- Always stop the engine before cleaning snow from blades or chute.
- Never put your hand in the discharge chute; clear away snow or debris with a shovel handle.
- Shut off engine and remove the spark plug wire before making repairs or mechanical adjustments.
- When clearing slopes, work up and down the slope, not across the face.
- Never leave a running snowblower unattended.
- Always handle and store gasoline safely.

SHOVELING SAFETY CHECKLISTS

Use these checklists to remember and follow safe shoveling techniques.

When shoveling snow, do you:
- Stretch before you start shoveling to warm up muscles?
- Pace yourself?
- Lift smaller amounts when snow is wet and heavy?
- Breathe in while lifting and out while throwing snow?
- Keep your feet shoulder width apart for balance?
- Hold the shovel close to your body for better leverage and less strain?
- Push snow rather than lift snow when possible?
- Bend your knees, keep your back straight, tighten your stomach muscles, and lift with your legs when lifting a shovelful of snow?
- Avoid twisting your body when throwing snow?
- Shovel stairs safely?
- Take breaks to allow muscles a chance to relax?
- Avoid smoking when shoveling?

To avoid slips, trips, and falls while shoveling, do you:
- Wear sturdy work boots with nonslip soles?
- Look where you’re going as you move around?
- Look for obstacles?
- Take special care when moving through deep snow?
- Move slowly and slide your feet on icy surfaces?

You hear something?
**Brrrrring Down Cold Risk**

*Prevent frostbite and hypothermia*

When working or playing in the cold outdoors, keep moving. Take extra care if it’s wet or windy. Wear warm, loose, layered clothing. Cover your feet, hands, face, and head. Get to a warm area and into warm, dry clothes or blankets if you’re having frostbite or hypothermia symptoms, or you’re wet, cold, or numb.

**Frostbite = Frozen Tissues** and symptoms include:
- Feeling extremely cold, numb, and possibly tingly or aching
- White or grayish yellow glossy skin, sometimes followed by blisters

Treat frostbite with these steps:
- Warm frozen part with blankets or warm (not hot) water.
- Don’t rub the body part, drink caffeine, or break blisters.
- Don’t warm with a hot stove, heat lamp, or hot water bottle.
- Exercise warmed body part (but stay off frostbitten feet).
- Get medical attention.

**Hypothermia = Dangerously Low Body Temperature** and symptoms include:
- Chills, shivering, and numbness.
- Slurred speech, poor coordination, confusion, drowsiness.

Treat hypothermia with these steps:
- Cover with blankets and/or provide body heat.
- Don’t give hot baths, or use electric blankets or hot water bottles.
- Keep person awake.
- Get medical attention.

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**Service Station Quiz**

*Test your knowledge*

Circle **T** for True and **F** for False.

1. **T** When refueling, turn off the engine, extinguish any smoking materials, and do not reenter the vehicle during refueling to prevent static buildup. **F**

2. **T** If a fire starts while you’re refueling, leave the area immediately and call for help. **F**

3. **T** To fill a portable gas can, set it on the ground to prevent static electricity from building up, and then proceed to fill the container. **F**

4. **T** On hybrid vehicles, the high-voltage cables are colored ORANGE. **F**

5. **T** Class O-rated rubber gloves can withstand up to 1,000 volts. **F**

6. **T** The only reason you need a well-ventilated work area is to protect yourself from carbon monoxide. **F**

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**Answers**

Diesel soot, and gasoline vapors that can cause cancer after long exposure.


Other harmful gases include oxides of nitrogen in engine exhaust that irritates the eyes, nose, and throat and contributes to respiratory problems.

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**CHILDREN’S DENTAL HEALTH MONTH**

If you have children, renew your efforts to start them off with the right dental hygiene this month. According to the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Health:

**For babies:**
- Clean teeth with a soft, clean cloth or baby’s toothbrush.
- Avoid putting the baby to bed with a bottle.
- Check teeth regularly for spots or stains.

**For children:**
- Brush teeth with a fluoride toothpaste.
- Provide healthy foods and limit sweet snacks and drinks.
- Provide low-fat milk and dairy products high in calcium.
- Schedule regular dental checkups.

**DENTAL HEALTH FOR SENIORS**

After a lifetime of taking good care of your teeth, the process may become harder with aging—especially if you suffer from arthritis or other mobility-reducing ailments. Try these tips from the National Institute on Aging if you find it hard to hold a toothbrush:
- Buy a toothbrush with a larger handle.
- Slide a bicycle grip or foam tube over the toothbrush handle.
- Use a rubber band to attach the toothbrush handle to your hand.

Check out the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s website for more tips on oral health for older Americans: http://www.cdc.gov/oralhealth.