WINTER'S HERE…

…and that means freezing temperatures, snow storms, icy roads, and slippery sidewalks – all of which present a variety of health and safety hazards. Because your organization is often called upon to respond when problems occur, you have an excellent opportunity to help educate your community about winter safety and gain some solid public relations points in the process.

Below and on the reverse side is an adaptable press release featuring a variety of winter safety tips. You can re-type it or download it in Word format at *www.vfis.com* and place it on your organizational letterhead. You may also wish to add tips specific to your region of the country. Simply insert your information in the areas indicated in brackets and mail the news release to the health or feature editor at your local newspaper as well as the news producers at your local television and radio stations. Better yet, call them to find out who is the most appropriate person to receive the release. You may even wish to offer your health and safety officer for interviews.

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140th Wing Safety Office

Offers Winter Safety Tips for the

Buckley Air Force Base

Community

Cold winter weather is fast approaching, and with it comes a variety of health and safety hazards both indoors and out. To help ensure everyone in our community stays safe and warm this season, the members of **140th Wing Safety Office** offer the following tips and suggest you post them where they can be seen by your family members and co-workers.

DRIVER SAFETY

Snow, ice, and extreme cold can make driving treacherous. In 1998, 131,000 motor vehicle crashes occurred during sleet and snowy conditions in the U.S. Before winter, make sure your car is ready for the season with a tune-up, snow tires or tires with good tread, a charged battery and sufficient antifreeze.

- Keep emergency gear in your car, including a cell phone, flashlight, jumper cables, sand or kitty litter, ice scraper/snow brush, small shovel, blankets, and warning devices. For longer trips take food, water, extra blankets, and required medication.
- If you must travel in bad weather, drive slowly and let someone your route and anticipated arrival time.
- Try to get to the store *before* a storm hits.
- Carbon monoxide kills. Don't sit in a parked car with the engine running unless a window is open. Don't warm up your car in the garage. If your car is outside, make sure the exhaust pipe and the area around it are free of snow.
- If you are stopped or stalled, light two flares, and place one at each end of the car. Stay in your vehicle and open a window slightly. Wrap yourself in blankets. Run your heater for a few minutes every hour to keep warm.

PEDESTRIAN SAFETY

Ice and snow-covered roads and walkways can be serious safety hazards.

- Walk on sidewalks, if possible. If they are icy and you must take to the streets, walk against the flow of traffic and as close to the curb as you can.
- Wear a bright piece of outer clothing if you have to walk in the street or road. Dark winter colors are often hard for motorists to see.
- Don't wear a hat or scarf that blocks your vision or makes it hard for you to hear traffic.
- Ice and snow can alter road conditions making it hard for vehicles to stop or slow down. Before you step off the curb -- even at a stop sign or traffic light -- make sure approaching vehicles have come to a complete stop.
- Be aware that snowdrifts can turn familiar territory into an alien landscape, covering curbs and other potential hazards.
- Bending your knees a little and taking slower, shorter steps can greatly reduce your chances of falling.

DRESS FOR THE COLD

Walking in a winter wonderland won't be so wonderful if you aren't prepared for the weather. Not dressing properly can lead to hypothermia, a serious condition in which your body temperature cools down to abnormal levels.

- Wear several layers of loose-fitting, lightweight clothing, and wear mittens instead of gloves. Trapped, insulating air warmed by body heat is the best protection from the cold.
- Wear a hat and make sure shoes or boots have nonskid soles.
- Change out of wet clothes as soon as possible.

HOME HEATING

Colder weather means it's time to turn on your furnace or other heating device. But take care, December, January, and February are the leading months for home fires, and heating devices are often the culprit. With proper precautions you'll be safe and warm this season.

- Install a smoke detector and carbon monoxide alarm near your bedrooms and on each floor.
- Know the symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning: headache, fatigue, nausea, dizziness, and shortness of breath.
- Have your *heating system* tuned up each year. If you heat your home with a *wood stove*, have the chimney connection and flue checked each year and make sure the stove is placed on an approved stove board to protect your floor from heat.
- Your *wood-burning fireplace* should have a sturdy fire screen in place. Make sure your chimney and flue are inspected each year and cleaned, if needed. Burn only untreated wood. Never burn paper or pine branches: pieces can float out the chimney and ignite your roof or your neighbor's as well as nearby trees.
- Do not use gas appliances such as ovens, ranges, or clothes dryers to heat your home.
- If you use a kerosene heater, never use gasoline, which can cause a fire or explosion. Use only water-clear 1-K grade kerosene. Never refuel the heater inside your home or when it is hot or in operation. Do not fill the tank above the "full" mark. Keep a door open to the rest of the house or open a window slightly to reduce the risk of carbon monoxide build-up.

SNOW SHOVELING

While snow shoveling can be good exercise, it can also be dangerous for optimists who take on more than they can handle.

- Dress warmly, paying special attention to feet, hands, nose and ears.
- Avoid shoveling snow if you are out of shape. If you have a history of heart trouble, do not shovel snow unless your doctor approves.
- Pace yourself and don't work to the point of exhaustion. Shoveling can raise your heart rate and blood pressure dramatically. Take frequent breaks.
- If possible, push snow in front of you. If you have to lift it, pick up small amounts and lift with your legs bent, not your back. Do not toss snow over your shoulder or to the side.
- Don't drink alcohol before or while shoveling snow and don't smoke while shoveling.

SNOW BLOWERS

Snow blowers or throwers aren't toys. These machines may help you efficiently remove snow from driveways and sidewalks, but they also cause thousands of emergency room visits each year.

- Make sure you understand your owner's manual safety procedures thoroughly.
- Be sure you have good visibility or light.
- Walk, never run.
- Keep the area clear of pets and people, especially kids.
- Clear the area of all obstacles that can clog the chute.
- Never put your hand in the snow blower to remove snow or debris. Turn it off and wait a few seconds, then use a stick or broom handle.
- Never leave the snow blower unattended and don't let kids operate it.
- Dress properly for the job. Wear boots that give you good footing on slippery surfaces and avoid loose fitting clothes that can get caught.
- Don't attempt to clear steep slopes.

"This is only a sample of the safety precautions we must take during the winter months," says **Major Southard** of **the Wing Safety Office** . . "Safety is a personal responsibility. If you are in doubt, think twice before doing anything that may prove hazardous to yourself, your property or those around you."