

Winter Safety Tips

Agricultural Engineering Extension: Karen Funkenbusch, Research Associate
Willard Downs, Extension Agricultural Engineer

Personal Health:

- Wear warm, loose-fitting, layered clothing. Light-weight wool is best. Also wear tightly woven, water repellant outer garments.
- Wear mittens instead of gloves. Mittens allow your fingers to move freely and remain in contact with each other, enabling your hands to stay warm.
- Wear a hat and scarf. The head and neck lose heat faster than any other part of the body.
- Stay dry.
- Do not drink alcoholic beverages. It is common to feel warm after drinking alcohol. However, alcohol causes the body to lose heat more rapidly.
- Watch for frostbite and other signs of cold weather exposure.
- Check on elderly friends and relatives often. The elderly make up the largest portion of cold weather fatalities in the country.

Frostbite:

It is difficult to judge the severity of frostbite until the individual is thawed.

- Superficial frostbite is characterized by yellowish or gray patches on the affected areas. The skin is soft and becomes red and flaky after thawing.
- Deep frostbite is characterized by pale, waxy skin. The affected areas will be cold, hard and solid and may turn blue after thawing. Large blisters may also appear after thawing.

If a person has frostbite follow these guidelines:

- Get the individual to a warm area as soon as possible and remove any clothing that could impair circulation.
- Rewarm the frostbitten area for 30 minutes. Place hands and feet in warm (not hot) water, and apply warm compresses to areas that cannot be placed in water.
- Apply dry sterile dressing to affected areas.
- Move thawed areas as little as possible.

- Do not rub the frostbitten area, especially with ice or snow.

Hypothermia:

Hypothermia occurs when the body's internal temperature drops below normal.

The symptoms of hypothermia are:

- Shivering
- Slow and slurred speech
- Dizziness
- Confusion
- Impaired vision
- Drowsiness

If you suspect someone is suffering from hypothermia do the following:

- Handle the individual gently. It is common for people suffering hypothermia to go into cardiac arrest.
- Remove wet clothing and replace with dry clothing.
- Rewarm the person, remembering to cover the head and neck. Apply warm compresses to the neck, chest and groin.
- If the person is awake give them warm, sweetened, non-alcoholic beverages.
- Seek immediate medical attention.

Equipment:

- ✓ Check the antifreeze levels in all equipment. The antifreeze should have a winter freeze protection to -34° F.
- ✓ Check all oil viscosity's (engine, transmission, rear-ends and differentials) to see if they match the expected air temperatures. Example of some oil ranges:
 - SAE 10W - 40: -4° F to 104° F
 - SAE 5W - 30: -22° F to 86° F
 - SAE 0W - 30: -40° F to 86° F
- ✓ Clean and check all equipment. Lubricate equipment in accordance with manufacturer instructions. Check tire pressure, belts and safety equipment.
- ✓ Use caution near power takeoff (PTO) shafts. Make sure all shields and guards are in place and avoid stepping over rotating shafts. Loose belts, buckles and drawstrings can easily be caught in moving or rotating equipment.

Automobiles:

- ✓ Check the antifreeze levels in all vehicles. The antifreeze should have a winter freeze protection to -34° F.
- ✓ Check all oil viscosity's to see if they match the expected air temperatures. Example of some oil ranges:
 - SAE 10W - 40: -4° F to 104° F
 - SAE 5W - 30: -22° F to 86° F
 - SAE 0W - 30: -40° F to 86° F
- ✓ Keep the following items in your car during the winter: inflated spare tire, jumper cables, ice scrapper, traction sand or kitty litter, blankets, wool socks, cap/hat, warning flares or fluorescent triangles, shovel, lock de-icer, tow rope or chain, first aid kit, flashlight, extra batteries, scissors, string/cord, plastic trash bags, exterior windshield fluid, candles, matches or lighter, cellular phone and non-perishable food items.

Stopped or Stalled:

- Stay with your car. Don't over exert, put bright markers on antenna or windows, and shine your dome light. If you run your car, clear exhaust pipe and run it just enough to stay warm.
- Regular maintenance is essential. Make sure your vehicle is working properly.
- Proper jumpstarting: Batteries give off hydrogen gas. Improper jumpstarting can lead to a battery explosion. Make sure the vehicles are not touching each other. Wear protective eyeglasses. Keep flames, cigarettes and jewelry away from the battery. Turn off the ignition of both vehicles before connecting the jumper cables to either vehicle. Make sure both vehicles have a negative ground (some older model cars have a positive ground). Connect the jumper cables in the following order: Attach the red cable to the positive (+) terminal of the dead battery. Then connect the other end of the red cable to the positive (+) terminal of the good battery. Next, attach the black cable to the negative (-) terminal of the good battery. Attach the other end of the black cable to the engine block not to the terminal of the dead battery. Start the car with the good battery first, then the car with the drained battery. Remove the cables in the OPPOSITE order you attached them.
- Drive with caution. Be aware of what the road conditions are before and during driving.
- Drive with your lights on. Keep the gas tank full. **WEAR YOUR SEAT BELT.**

Get a grip:

- Brand new all-season or "snow tires" will perform better than tires that are nearing their limit of reliable treadwear (no less than 2/32 inch). A tire's tread should not be allowed to wear down below this margin. It's equally important to maintain the air pressure listed by the vehicle manufacturer in the owner's manual.
- Make sure you plan ahead and have all the emergency numbers listed in your car for the area you are traveling in. Let someone know where you are going and how long it will take you to get there.

Livestock:

- Keep water troughs and waterers thawed. If you have an electric waterer, make sure it is grounded correctly.
- Fence ponds to protect livestock (and people) from falling through the ice or getting stuck in the mud. If you have to chop a hole in the ice, use the buddy system or let someone know what you're doing, and how long it might take. Also, bring along a rope.
- Use caution when moving big round bales. A single round bale can weigh 500 to 2,000 pounds and big square bales can weigh 1,000 to 2,000 pounds. It is crucial that you use equipment capable of handling this much weight. The extreme weight of a large bale can seriously change the center of gravity of the vehicle, leading to the potential for a rollover. Keep the load as low as possible to avoid a rollover. Travel slowly and avoid jerky movements. Don't use a standard front-end loader to move a big round bale without proper bale restraining devices. The bale could roll down the loader arms and crush the operator. Remember to use extreme caution when maneuvering on slopes or inclines.
- Keep areas where animals walk as clear as possible to avoid injury to both you and the animals.
- Provide some type of shelter for animals. If animals are kept in confinement, make sure there is proper cold weather ventilation. Provide proper bedding for animals and keep it clean and change it often.
- Small or baby animals may require additional heating, such as heat lamps and radiant heaters to maintain good survival rates.
- Proper nutrition and energy intakes are essential for all livestock.

Facilities:

- Keep walkways and lots cleared of ice and snow.
- Walk and drive slowly. Sprains, strains and broken bones are common during the winter.
- Make sure ventilation systems are working properly and set for cold weather operation.
- Change furnace filters and make sure flues are clean and free of debris to reduce the chance of fire. Make sure smoke detectors, carbon monoxide detectors, and fire extinguishers work properly.

For additional information, contact your local Outreach and Extension Center or the MU Extension Rural Safety and Health Program at 1.800.995.8503.

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