

Winter Safety tips for Seniors

HOME HEATING SAFETY

More home fires happen during the winter months than any other time of the year mainly due to home heating devices and people age 65 and older are three times more likely to die or be injured in a home fire as those younger. In addition, heating devices and household appliances that are fueled by gas, oil, kerosene or wood in a closed up house can also produce deadly carbon monoxide gas.

Some simple things seniors can do to protect themselves are:

Install smoke and carbon monoxide detectors on every level of the home and check the batteries every month and change them at least once a year.

If you're using a space heater remember that space heaters need space. Keep anything that can burn at least three feet away from the heater, and if you're looking to buy a new space heater get one that automatically shuts off if the heater falls over.

If you use a wood burning fire place make sure you have a glass front or screen large enough to catch flying sparks and rolling logs and have chimney flue pipe checked once a year.

Get an ABC multipurpose fire extinguisher for the home; learn how to use it and check it yearly to be sure is working.

WINTER AUTO SAFETY

To ensure winter time driving safety - if you live in a cold climate - have your vehicle serviced and winterized so it's ready for winter driving and winter road conditions.

Some specific items to be checked are the:

Tires: check the tire air pressure and make sure your tires have sufficient tread.

Radiator: have the anti-freeze levels checked.

Belts: inspect the belts and hoses for cracks or leaks.

Oil: ask you mechanic about switching to a thinner grade of engine oil for better performance in colder temperatures.

Wipers: inspect the windshield wipers and wiper fluid to ensure better visibility.

Battery: make sure the battery is fully charged.

Here are a few other handy winter safety items for seniors to carry in their car, especially on trips out of town:

AAA Severe Weather Travel Kit

Price: \$39.99

Lifelinefirstaid.com, 503-352-1396

This #1 selling auto safety kit designed for winter and cold weather emergencies. It includes 46 vital items that can help in an emergency like a folding shovel,

emergency survival blanket, ice scraper, emergency candles and water proof matches, 3 packets of water, poncho, flashlight with batteries, gloves, hand warmer, LED safety light, 5 in 1 whistle, 27 piece first aid kit, AAA car care guide and a carry bag. Available at Target or your local AAA Travel Store.

AutoSport 660i Jump Starter/Inflator

Price: \$129.95

Autosportcatalog.com, 800-953-0814

A life saver on a cold winter night when your car battery's dead or if you have a low or flat tire. The Jump Starter/Inflator is a 3- in-1 tool that's a flash light, battery charger and air compressor all in one handy unit.

PREVENTING WINTERTIME FALLS

A common problem among the elderly is broken hips, which happen more frequently in winter due wet and slippery conditions. To help prevent wintertime falls seniors should wear shoes with non-skid soles, stay only on sidewalks or areas that have been cleared of snow and ice, use handrails when available and avoid getting out after dark or in hazardous weather conditions. Here are some other handy helpers to consider:

Yaktrax Walker

Price: \$19.95

Yaktrax.com, 866-925-8729

For seniors who want greater stability walking on ice and snow, the Yaktrax Walker fits over your shoes or boots for snow-tire-like traction. Available in four sizes.

Ice Pick Cane

Price: \$46.00

Fashionablecanes.com, 877-890-7677

A walking cane with a retractable ice pick tip for use on slippery surfaces. The black or bronze shaft is adjustable in length and has a comfortable hard plastic handle that is specially designed for support on slippery surfaces.

Ice Carpet Set Of 2

Price: \$24.98

Fulloflife.com 800-521-7638

Prevent slips, skids and tumbles on your entrance walk and sidewalk even on thick accumulations of ice and snow. The Ice Carpet uses a non-skid material to help provide surefootedness on your walks no matter what the weather. 10 ft. long x 18" wide.

Wovel

Price: \$119.95

Wovel.com 800-430-0475

The snow shovel on a wheel makes snow removal easier and faster reducing your risks of back and heart injuries. Instead of lifting a heavy shovel full of snow, you just push down on the handlebar and the scooper lifts up and throws the snow forward.