WINTER SAFETY GUIDELINES
Updated January 2020

**Personal Safety**
Stay indoors during a storm, if possible, and keep your cell phone(s) fully charged.

**Prevent Problems:**

**Stay healthy – physically and emotionally**
- Get your flu shot
- Eat well
- Exercise regularly
- Wash your hands frequently
- Avoid contact with sick people, whenever possible
- Keep in contact with family and friends for social and emotional support

**Stay warm by bundling up**
- Many thin layers is better than one thick piece of material
- Rule of thumb: dress children and elders in one more extra layer (than an adult would wear)
- To keep infants from suffocating, opt for one-piece sleepers and wearable blankets

**Know How to Identify Health Problems and How to Deal with Them:**

**Learn Signs and Treatment of Frostbite:**
- Loss of feeling in the limbs
- White, gray, or blistered fingers, toes, ear lobes, nose tip
- Keep the person warm and dry, apply warm water to frostbitten areas, do not rub!
- **Get medical help immediately.**

**Learn Signs of Hypothermia and Treatment:**
- Uncontrollable shivering
- Memory loss, disorientation or incoherence
- Slurred speech, drowsiness, or exhaustion
- Get the person to a warm location (warm the center of the body first), replace wet clothing with dry and encourage them to drink plenty of warm (non-alcoholic) liquids.
- **Get medical help immediately.**

**Home Safety**

**Prevent Problems:**

**Winterize your home**
- Install weather stripping, insulation and storm windows
- Insulate water lines that run along exterior walls
- Clean out gutters and repair roof leaks
- During cold spell, keep cabinet doors open to allow warm air to circulate around pipes particularly those in the kitchen and bathrooms.
- Keep a slow trickle of water flowing through faucets connected to pipes that run through unheated or unprotected spaces
• Check your heating systems:
  o Have your heating system serviced professionally to make sure that it is clean, working properly and ventilated to the outside. Check that outside vent is not obstructed by snow etc.
  o Inspect and clean fireplaces and chimneys. When the fireplace is not in use close the flue
  o Install a smoke detector. Test batteries monthly and replace them twice a year
    ▪ The symptoms of CO2 poisoning are: headache, dizziness, weakness, upset stomach, vomiting, chest pain and confusion

**Steps to Take When Carbon Monoxide Alarm Sounds**

Never ignore a CO2 alarm, and do not try to find the source of the gas. Instead, follow these steps:

- Immediately move outside to fresh air
- Call emergency services, fire department or 911
- Do a head count to check that everyone is accounted for
- Do not reenter until emergency responders have given you permission to do so

**Equip in Advance for Emergencies to be prepared for weather-related emergencies, including power outages**

- Stock food that needs no cooking or refrigeration and water stored in clean containers
- Have extra prescription medication on hand
- Ensure that your cell phone is fully charged.
- Keep an up-to-date emergency kit – See FEMA website for items to be included

**Know How to Deal with Snow/Ice Outside Your Home:**

- Sprinkle outdoor stairs, walkways, and driveways liberally with sand, rock salt or de-icing compounds to avoid slips and falls
- Use handrails on outdoor stairs
- Shovel carefully:
  o Stretch and warm up before you begin; take frequent breaks; cool down if you feel tired or strained
  o Position yourself so that you’re shoveling the snow in front of your body and lift with your legs, not your back.
  o Avoid shoveling if you’re out of shape or have cardiac issues
  o Do not drink alcohol prior to or while shoveling
  o Do not smoke while shoveling
  o If using a snow blower, follow the owner’s manual’s guidelines and:
    ▪ Before you begin, fill the snow blower with fuel, while the engine is still cool
    ▪ If the blower jams, turn it off
    ▪ Keep your hands away from the moving parts
    ▪ Always turn off the machine before touching or adjusting it
    ▪ Never leave a snowblower unattended while it’s running
**Vehicle Safety**
In snowy weather drive only if it is absolutely necessary. Try not to travel alone. Keep others informed of your schedule.

**Prevent Problems:**

**Prepare Your Car for Cold and Snow:**
- Service the radiator and maintain antifreeze level, check tire tread, if necessary, replace tires
- Keep gas tank full to avoid ice in the tank and fuel lines
- Use a wintertime formula in your windshield washer and keep the windshield washer container full
- Prepare a winter emergency kit to keep in your car in case you become stranded, the kit should include:
  - blankets
  - booster cables, flares, tire pump and a bag of sand or cat litter (for traction)
  - flashlight and extra batteries
  - first-aid kit

**Know How to Deal with Problems on the Road:**
- Pull off the road, if possible
- Put on your flashers
- Use your cell phone to call for assistance, 911
- Stay with your vehicle unless instructed differently

**Miscellaneous Safety:**
- Report damaged/downed power lines and/or gas line leaks
- Check on family and neighbors who are especially at risk from cold weather hazards.

**Helpful Websites:**
- CDC, [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)
- National Safety Council, [www.nsc.org](http://www.nsc.org)
- UPMC Pinnacle Wellness Library, [www.pinnaclehealth.org](http://www.pinnaclehealth.org)
- FEMA, [www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov)
- US Fire Administration, [www.usfa.fema.gov](http://www.usfa.fema.gov)
- National Institutes for Health, [www.NIH.gov](http://www.NIH.gov)