



RICE COUNTY

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News Release

Winter Hazard Awareness Week (November 04-08, 2019)

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Winter in Minnesota can be described in many ways, but unpredictable isn't one of them. At some point, it **will** snow and temperatures **will** drop below zero. There **will** be ice on the roads. High winds **will** raise the risk of being outdoors from hazardous to life-threatening.

Minnesota summers are cherished times. People spend every warm minute they can enjoying the outdoors, but as the season turns to fall, and the air turns crisp, we know a Minnesota winter is soon on the way. As we get out the gloves and boots, it's time to refresh our winter safety knowledge and skills - and get prepared.

The best way to avoid the hazards is to stay warm and cozy indoors, but it's tough to stay cooped up for months — and even staying indoors for long periods carries risks. Problems can arise with indoor air, and fire risks increase dramatically in the winter.

Do you know how to stay warm, safe and happy all winter?

Well, fear not. Surviving, even enjoying, the winter season is not as hard as it may seem. Getting ready for winter doesn't always take a lot of work. Awareness of winter hazards saves lives. Know how to prepare and respond to Minnesota winters.

Most Minnesotans, through years of practice and experience, are knowledgeable about winter weather conditions. We know how to dress, drive, be active outdoors and generally get through the winter with our lives, homes and property intact. Nonetheless, deaths and injuries occur every winter because people fail to take precautions. Carelessness, overconfidence, ignorance and innocence can lead to damage, injury or death from winter weather conditions.

Little things do matter!

Sometimes it's just a few little things that can make the difference between safety and suffering: having a survival kit in your car, changing the batteries in your carbon monoxide detector, and staying well-hydrated during outdoor fun.

To help Rice County and other Minnesota residents minimize risks and mitigate the hazards of winter, the Minnesota Department of Public Safety – in collaboration with the National Weather Service and other county, state, federal and non-profit agencies – sponsor “Winter Hazard Awareness Week” each fall to educate, inform, remind and reinforce the behaviors that lead to a warm, safe and enjoyable winter season.

The event includes a media campaign, literature, website (<http://www.winterweather.state.mn.us>) and other informational materials with target specific information each day. The information continues throughout the season on the websites with updates, timely facts and tips which can be used in conjunction with school, church, or civic programs.

Quick winter weather tips include:

- **Dress to suit the weather.** Thin layers of loose-fitting clothes will trap body heat and aid air circulation. Outer clothing should be hooded, tightly woven, and water-repellant. Mittens are warmer than gloves. Wear a hat – most body heat is lost through the head.
 - **Check the weather forecast before going outdoors or traveling.** Pay particular attention to wind-chill, which can create dangerously cold conditions. Monitor the National Weather Service forecasts, statements, watches, and warnings for the latest information on a developing winter storm. Their website is: www.weather.gov/safety/winter
- **Watch for signs of hypothermia and frostbite, especially in the very young and the elderly.** Symptoms of hypothermia are shivering, confusion, and loss of muscular control. Frostbite causes loss of feeling and a white or pale appearance in extremities such as fingers, toes, tip of nose, and ear lobes. If you see these symptoms, get medical attention immediately.
- **Pace your outdoor activity.** Avoid strenuous activity in extremely cold temperatures. Your heart must work harder to pump blood through constricted vessels in arms and legs.
- **Winterize your home and vehicle before the cold weather arrives.** Prepare an emergency kit for your home and one for your vehicle, and make sure your home heating system is in good working order. If possible, re-insulate your home to avoid cold air leaks and reduce heating costs.

For additional information, check out the website at: <http://www.winterweather.state.mn.us> or [Winter Weather Safety website](#) . The websites provide simple winter awareness safety tips for work, play, home and travel. There are also lesson plans, internet resources and direct links to weather warnings, road conditions and more!

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