

# Winter Safety

By Chief Bill Reed

With winter rearing its ugly head, I would like to offer some information regarding preparing for cold weather emergencies. Most of the information included in this article comes from The National Safety Council. Cold weather is particularly dangerous for the very young and the elderly. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) offers these tips for staying warm: wear loose-fitting layered clothes and water repellent outer garments including a hat or hood as much body heat is lost through the head; stretch before shoveling snow and take frequent breaks (preferably out of the elements); avoid working too hard as it strains the heart; cover your mouth to protect your lungs from cold air; drink water and other fluids to avoid dehydration; watch for signs of frostbite such as "pins and needles" feeling followed by numbness and watch for signs of hypothermia (severe drop in body temperature). Including uncontrolled shivering, slow speech, memory loss, stumbling, sleepiness, and extreme tiredness. Do not eat snow it lowers body temperature.

The New York City Fire Department (FDNY) offers these tips regarding home heating equipment the leading cause of fires during December, January and February: keep heating devices at least 3 feet from flammable items such as drapes and furniture; ensure proper ventilation for gas fueled heating devices; never use an extension cord to connect a space heater to an outlet; unplug space heaters when they are not in use; look for heaters with automatic shut off features and have wood and coal stoves, fireplaces and chimneys inspected and cleaned by a professional every year.

Regarding vehicles The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) recommends: install quality winter tires with adequate tread; maintain at least a half tank of gas during the winter season; place a winter emergency kit in each car; check your antifreeze levels, battery and ignitions system, brakes, exhaust, fuel/air filters, heater/defroster, lights, oil, thermostat, and windshield wipers. If stranded the CDC suggests: tie a brightly colored cloth to the antenna as a signal to rescuers and raise the hood of the car (if it is not snowing); move anything you need from the trunk to the passenger area; wrap your entire body including your head in extra clothing, blankets or newspapers; stay awake to remain less vulnerable to cold weather health problems; run the motor and heater about 10 minutes every hour with window slightly open; make sure your exhaust pipe is not blocked with snow to reduce the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning; continue to move your arms and legs to improve circulation and stay warm and huddle with other people for warmth. If you follow these tips winter emergencies can be much more manageable. Some things you should keep in your vehicle during winter are: extra blankets, extra dry clothing, tools and jumper cables, windshield washer fluid, perhaps some snacks such as chips, nutrition bars, water or juice, a cell phone can be a life saver and a battery powered weather radio in case the vehicle battery loses power. Be prepared for the hazards of winter cold weather emergencies. Stay Safe. We are pleased to serve you.