



STAT



Safety Talk and Tips

Eastern Region's Environmental Safety and Health Newsletter

Volume 3, Issue 4

December 2007

In this issue:

- Safety Tips—Snow Shoveling
- 10 Ways To Stop Spreading Colds
- Safety Tips—Driving In Ice & Snow
- On thin Ice? - Ice Safety
- Safety Tips—Holiday Hazards
- Safety Tips—Holiday Stress
- Federal Agencies—EO 13423
- Colder Months Energy Savings
- Environmental Stewardship In The Workplace

Ready for Winter?

As we enter the winter season, we encounter a new array of safety and health issues. Additionally, energy costs to heat our workplace and homes are on the increase. This issue is dedicated to cold weather safety and energy solutions.

Safety Tips Snow Shoveling

Here are some Safety Tips to keep in mind while shoveling snow:

- **Dress in Layers** -- Most people throw on a heavy coat, then quickly overheat once they've been at it a few minutes. This puts your heart under greater strain. Try wearing a shirt under a sweater under a light jacket, and strip off layers as you warm up.
- **Drink Water** -- Most people shovel snow in the morning when they're dehydrated. Dehydration also stresses the heart, so drink a couple of glasses of water about thirty minutes before you start tossing snow.
- **Take it Slow** -- Take a break every 5 or 10 minutes while you're working. And never let your heart rate exceed 85 percent of its maximum. To find out your maximum heart rate subtract your age from 220.
- **Don't Ignore Chest Pain or Tightness** -- If this kind of ache strikes assume the worst and call an ambulance or have someone drive you to an emergency room.



*Your Eastern Region
Environmental, Safety and
Health Advisory Board*

- | | |
|------------------|----------------|
| Gene Auciello | WFO Albany |
| Bill Comeaux | WFO Cleveland |
| Kim Campbell | WFO Columbia |
| Mike Emlaw | WFO Charleston |
| Craig Hunter | OHRFC |
| Barbara Watson | WFO Binghamton |
| Kevin Murray | ERH |
| Peter Gabrielsen | ERH |

Colds: 10 Ways to Stop Spreading Them

1. Wash your hands frequently.
2. Don't share cups.
3. Use tissues when you blow your nose, then throw them away.
4. Keep your hands away from your eyes, nose and mouth.
5. Use disposable paper towels in the kitchen, not cloth ones.
6. Wash your children's toys once a week.
7. Cover your mouth with a tissue or your hands when you sneeze.
8. Open your windows when the weather is decent. Consider buying a humidifier.
9. Frequently clean doorknobs, light switches, telephones and counter tops.
10. Don't let anyone smoke in your house.



Driving in Snow and Ice

*If you don't have to drive--don't!
But if you must, drive defensively and smart.*



- Before beginning your trip, know the current road conditions.
- Be alert for potential driving hazards including downed branches, trees, electric lines and icy areas, such as shady spots and bridges.
- Leave a few minutes early to allow extra time to get to your destination.
- Slow down. Triple the usual distance between your car and the one ahead.
- Stay in the plowed lane; avoid driving over the ridges between the plowed areas. If you must switch lanes, slow down, signal and move over slowly.
- Don't pass a snowplow or spreader unless it is absolutely necessary.
- Don't park along the street. Snowplow drivers can't fully clear a road if cars are in their way.
- If you skid, steer into the skid. If the back of your car is skidding to the left, for example, turn the steering wheel to the left.
- Don't pump your brakes, and avoid locking them up. If your brakes lock, take your foot off the brake pedal for a moment.
- If your car has an Anti-lock Braking System (ABS) and you must brake, be sure to press the brake pedal and hold
- If you're involved in a minor fender-bender, move the cars out of the lanes of travel.
- Keep an emergency winter driving kit with a blanket and flashlight in the car.
- While driving, keep your headlights on. Keep snow and ice off your mirrors, windows and lights.
- As always, wear your seatbelts.

On Thin Ice? - Ice Safety



During the winter, in order for people to venture out onto ice-covered ponds, lakes, streams and rivers, an ice thickness of 4 inches or more is recommended. Snowmobiles and ATVs require an ice thickness of at least 5 inches, and cars and trucks require an ice thickness of at least 8 to 12 inches.

Another important safety consideration is snow covered ice. A blanket of snow acts as an insulator and actually prevents the ice from becoming thicker, despite below-freezing temperatures. In fact, the weight of the snow can cause the ice beneath it to fracture, or turn the top few inches of ice into slush.

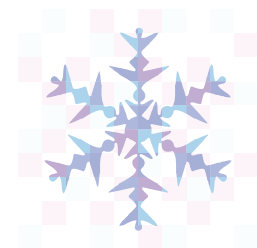
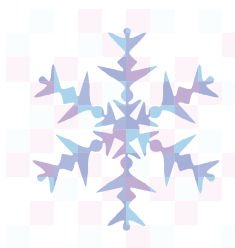
Factors that can be used to assess ice strength include ice appearance, thickness, daily temperature, snow cover, water depth beneath the ice, the size of the body of water, water chemistry, currents, and distribution of the load on the ice. Anyone planning work or recreational activities on ponds, lakes, streams or rivers should use common sense—test the ice to make sure it is thick enough for your activity. Do not venture out alone and let others know where you are planning to go.

Be prepared for an emergency. If you break through the ice, don't panic. Don't try to climb out—you'll probably break the ice again. Lay both arms on the unbroken ice and kick hard. This will help lift your body onto the ice. Roll to safety. To help someone who has fallen in, lie down flat and reach to the victim with a ladder, plank, rope, or branch; or, form a human chain. After securing the victim, slide backwards to the solid ice. The victim may need treatment for hypothermia (cold exposure), artificial respiration, or CPR.

The best advice—don't put yourself, and others, in needless danger by venturing out too soon or too late in the ice season.

More Safety Tips ... For the Winter Holiday Season ...

- Carry a plastic bottle of sand mixed with rock-salt in the trunk of your car. If you get stuck on sheet ice, sprinkling some around the tire may provide traction. Some people fill up empty gallon paint cans with sand and replace the lids, instead of carrying bags of sand. Roofing shingles also work well.
- When shoveling snow, take your time and don't try to do too much at once. It is an excellent cardio-vascular workout, but you have to be in good shape at the outset. One tip to make it easier: If wet snow sticks to your snow shovel, spray the shovel with spray shortening.
- Don't pick up the pan your turkey is roasting in and discover that the "hot mitt" gloves you are wearing don't provide enough insulation. Check to make sure before you lift the pan.
- If you have a new puppy or child in the house, don't decorate your tree with popcorn garlands, candy canes, or other edibles. Many a big tree has been toppled by little people and animals.
- When the gas tank in your car gets to half full, fill it up. You never know when a massive traffic jam will snare you.
- Some cats love to eat tinsel. It doesn't agree with them and can cause serious harm.
- Walking your dog at lunch time is more pleasant and safer than trying to do it in the dark before or after work. You can see icy patches more clearly, and motorists can see you better, also.
- If you have cookies baking, don't ask someone to take over if that person is sleepy, lying on the couch and watching television. Or, if you do, make sure you smoke detector works and is loud enough to wake them.
- Traffic jams, sudden storms and detours might mean that you have to spend much longer than you planned in your car. It can take two to three hours to drive as little as 15 miles on an icy road. Put together a winter-driving kit, including a pair of gloves, a warm hat, and a blanket.



Coping with Holiday Stress

- Have a realistic plan. This will reduce the strain of juggling tasks, duties, errands and appointments.
- Stick to your lists and your budget. Overspending is a common source of holiday stress. Remember that the point of the season is to show care, not to simply consume.
- Learn how to say "no" to less important activities. Be selective. Don't over-schedule. If you limit yourself to two social events per week, you won't run down your batteries.
- Plan parties or shopping trips with family and friends, in order to cut down on the number of events and responsibilities.
- Schedule some "down time" to use for rest and reflection.
- Keep your sense of humor.
- Establish your own standards, and don't be governed by other's expectations or demands.
- Don't skip meals or live on snacks because you are too busy.
- Don't sacrifice your exercise program as you get busier.

Federal Agencies Striving for Green

On January 24, 2007, President Bush issued **Executive Order 13423, “Strengthening Federal Environment, Energy, and Transportation Management.”** As the nation’s single largest energy user, the federal government has an obligation to lead by example to reduce dependence on foreign oil and conserve resources. The Executive Order targets several areas for improving federal leadership and performance.



1. **30% Reduction in Energy Consumption:** The Executive Order requires agencies to reduce greenhouse gases through a reduction in energy consumption of 30% by the end of FY 2015. The federal government spends annually about \$3.5 billion on energy for its 500,000 federal facilities.
2. **Water Efficiency:** The Executive Order requires agencies to reduce water consumption by 2% annually through FY 2015. Water requires significant energy input for treatment, pumping, heating, and process uses. Solutions can be as simple as installing low-flow faucets.
3. **Renewable Energy:** agencies need to work toward getting at least half of their energy from renewable energy sources. This can include purchasing renewable energy as well as on-site use of renewable energy. Renewable energy is energy from the sun, wind, plants, and the earth itself.
4. **Sustainable Building Construction:** New construction and major renovations must comply with the *Guiding Principles for the 2006 Federal Leadership in High Performance and Sustainable Buildings MOU* which includes minimizing the energy and resource consumption, protecting and conserving water, and using environmentally preferable products and materials.
5. **Federal Fleets:** Agencies must ensure fleet petroleum reduction of 2 % annually, increased use of alternative fuels of 10% annually, and use of hybrids.

What can you do right now to start reducing your office’s energy consumption?

- o Turn off lights or install motion detection switches that automatically shut off lights in areas other than the office operations room.
- o Turn off non-operational computers at night
- o Unplug equipment that is not being used at the time such as cell phone chargers, coffeemakers, printers, radios, etc.
- o Photocopy only what is needed and use both sides of the paper
- o Recycle

Energy Saving Tips for the Colder Months

As we enter the cold months, there are many things that can be done to save money and reduce your energy consumption.

1. **Seal Leaks, Cracks, Gaps, and Holes:** You can save you up to 40% on your annual energy bill through energy efficiency. Seal leaks, cracks and gaps in your duct distribution system for central heating and cooling. Seal gaps around chimneys, furnace flues, plumbing pipes and light fixtures. Also caulk holes in walls, especially if they penetrate between floors to an unheated basement or attic.
2. **Insulate your Hot Water:** You can save up to 5% on your energy bill by insulating hot-water pipes and lowering the temperature on the water heater from 130°F to 120°F.
3. **Add Insulation:** The cost of adding insulation can be recouped in as little as two years. Insulate pipes and ductwork that is not located in a living space.
4. **Program Thermostats:** You can save up to 20% by decreasing the temperature in your house by 5 to 10 degrees at night or when no one is home.
5. **Use your shades:** Open the shades and let the sun in to help naturally warm a room and then close the shades and window coverings at night to reduce heat loss.
6. **Fireplaces:** Fireplaces suck heat from home and up the chimney. Hence, use for ambience, but not for heat. Glass doors only improve the situation slightly. Wood-burning and pellet-burning stoves are better because their hot surfaces are directly heating room air and they are designed as a heat source.
7. **Look for “Energy Star”:** If replacing lighting or appliances, look for Energy Star. Energy Star appliances are typically more efficient and cost less to run. Swap compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs) for incandescent bulbs. Changing one light bulb to a CFL can save you \$30 over the life of the bulb.

Environmental Stewardship in the Workplace



It is important that we all use the available resources provided to us in a responsible and economical manner. The following are some things to consider at work and/or at home to make the most of our available resources.

- Consider developing an environmental stewardship vision statement and creating an environmental stewardship team to assist in becoming more environmentally friendly at work.
- Only print or photocopy what is absolutely necessary.
- Print in “fast draft” mode unless higher quality is needed.
- Photocopy and print on both sides of the paper.
- E-mail reports or letters rather than making printed copies.
- Recycle printer and copier cartridges, cardboard, paper, aluminum cans, and plastic and glass containers.
- Purchase items that use a high percentage of recycled material.
- Purchase higher efficiency energy star products.
- Ensure that your refrigerator or freezer is working at peak efficiency.
 - Ensure that the gaskets around the door are not worn. If they are worn, replace them.
 - Ensure that the condenser coils are cleaned once a year.
- Ensure that air conditioning/heating units are operating at peak efficiency.
 - Have preventative maintenance done on a regularly scheduled basis or just prior to the cooling/heating season.
 - Ensure that leaves, grass and other debris are not blocking airflow around the units.
 - Replace air filters before they become dirty and restrict airflow.
- Consider lowering your thermostat a degree or two in winter and raising it a degree or two in summer.
- Program or adjust thermostats in unoccupied rooms/portions of buildings up a few degrees in summer and down a few degrees in winter.
- Use long lasting, high efficiency, and “enviro-safe” light bulbs and florescent tubes.
- Consider purchasing alternative fuel vehicles or more energy efficient vehicles.

For more information please check out the following helpful links:

<http://www.energy.noaa.gov/>
<http://www1.eere.energy.gov/femp/>



About this Newsletter

This newsletter is brought to you on a quarterly basis by the Eastern Region Environmental Safety and Health Advisory Board to help increase awareness of the importance of the safety and health programs within the Department of Commerce, NOAA, and the National Weather Service. Your comments are welcome. Please send all comments to Kevin Murray.

REMEMBER, SAFETY FIRST!