

SAFE WINTER

GUIDE
TO A SAFE WINTER



RCB

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1. INTRODUCTION



Winter is a time that can captivate with snowy landscapes and offers plenty of opportunities for outdoor fun. It is also a season that brings challenges requiring proper preparation and caution.

Weather conditions can be unpredictable, and low temperatures and icy surfaces can pose a threat both on the road and in everyday activities.

The "Safe Winter" guide has been prepared to help ensure safety in these challenging conditions. It contains tips on properly preparing your car, taking care of your health, protecting your home, and safely enjoying winter activities. With these practical recommendations, winter will become safer and more comfortable for everyone - whether spent in the city or in the great outdoors.



2. TRAVELING BY CAR

Car inspection before the winter season

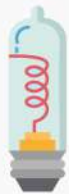


One of the causes of fatal accidents in winter is improper preparation of the car for the season and a lack of knowledge on how to proceed if the vehicle becomes stranded during travel due to a breakdown or difficult weather conditions (such as a snowstorm or blizzard).

Before the winter season, check:



- **Battery** – check the condition of the battery, which in winter is more loaded. If necessary, order its charging or replacement.



- **Lighting** – make sure that all the bulbs in the car work properly, and the blown or dimly lit replace. It is also good to check the setting of the headlights at the diagnostic station.



- **Brake system** – check the condition of the brake pads, brake discs and the condition of the wires, including the hand brake cable. Check the brake fluid level.



- **Wiper blades** – check the status of wiper blades. Replace them if they are damaged.

- **Operating fluids:**

- **engine oil** – before winter, check the level and quality of engine oil, and if necessary, replace with oil with appropriate parameters for low temperatures.
 - **coolant** – make sure the coolant is resistant to low temperatures and refill or replace it if necessary.
 - **brake fluid** – check the level and condition of brake fluid, and if it is contaminated or more than two years old, replace it to ensure the braking system is working effectively.
 - **windshield washer fluid** – top up the windshield washer fluid, choosing one that is resistant to low temperatures.
- **Filters** – check the engine air filter, cabin filter, and fuel filter (and replace them if necessary).
 - **Locks and gaskets** – lubricate locks and seals with a product that protects against freezing.

Remember to use winter tires!

All-season tires are considered a less safe option than seasonal tires.

Winter tires effectively "dispel" snow and, most importantly, maintain their optimal performance in low temperatures.



Driving techniques in difficult conditions (snow, ice, fog)

Winter road conditions, such as snow, ice, and fog, require drivers to exercise extra caution and use appropriate driving techniques.

Here are some practical tips to help you drive safely in these challenging conditions:

Driving in snow:



Vehicle preparation:

- Remove snow and ice from windows, mirrors, and headlights to ensure good visibility.
- Remove snow from the roof to avoid endangering the safety of other drivers.
- Turn on the low beams to be visible to others.

Driving style:

- Start gently to avoid wheel spin.
- Maintain a moderate speed and keep a greater distance from other vehicles – stopping distances on snow are much longer.
- Brake and accelerate smoothly, avoiding sudden movements of the steering wheel.

Braking:

- In cars with ABS, press the brake pedal evenly. In vehicles without ABS, use pulse braking to avoid skidding.



Wheel spin is a situation in which the car's wheels lose traction with the surface and spin in place without effectively moving the vehicle forward.

Driving on ice

Recognizing the surface:

- Be cautious of "black ice" – a thin, transparent layer of ice that is nearly invisible. It most often occurs on bridges, overpasses, and shaded sections of the road.

Driving technique:

- Maintain an appropriate, low speed.
- Avoid sudden braking, acceleration, or steering.
- If the car starts to skid, do not press the brake – gently steer in the direction the vehicle is sliding to regain control.

Safe Distance:

- Keep an even greater distance from other vehicles than when driving on snow – stopping distances on ice can be several times longer.



Driving in fog

Visibility:

- Turn on the fog lights when visibility
- drops below 50 meters.
- Use low beams – do not turn on high beams, as they can reflect off the fog and worsen visibility.



fog lights



low beams

Speed and distance:

- Adjust your speed to the visibility, driving slower than usual.
- Maintain a greater distance from the vehicle in front of you to allow time to react in case of sudden stops.

Behavior on the road:

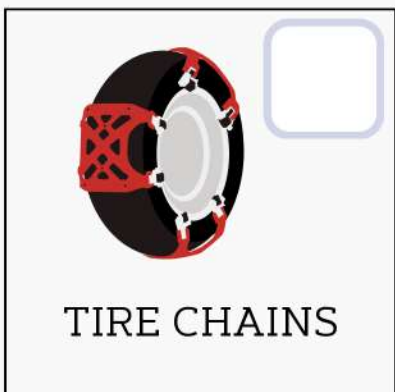
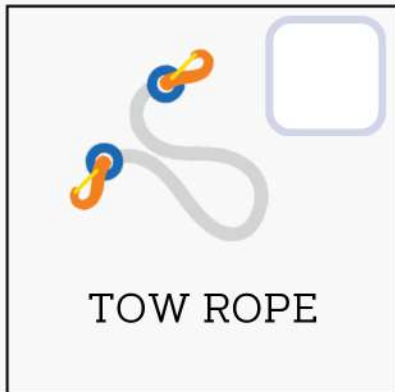
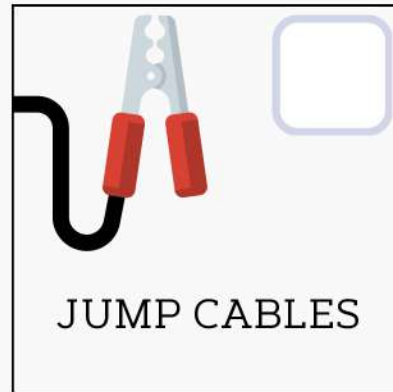
- Use the road markings to maintain the correct driving path.
- If visibility is very poor, consider pulling over to a safe spot (to avoid endangering yourself and others) and waiting for the fog to clear.



Winter emergency kit

Preparing an appropriate emergency kit is crucial for handling unexpected situations on the road.

Here is a list of the most important items to have in your car during the winter season:



3. FIRST AID

Hypothermia and frostbite

Winter brings the risk of hypothermia and frostbite, especially when staying outside in the cold for extended periods without proper clothing or preparation. Quick action and proper care can prevent serious health consequences.



HYPOTHERMIA

Hypothermia is a condition in which the body temperature drops **below 35°C**, which can lead to disturbances in heart function, the nervous system, and other organs.



Mild symptoms (35–32°C)

The body responds with **weakness and cooling**, especially **of the hands and feet**, which may lose sensation. A characteristic symptom is **intense muscle shivering**, which is an attempt to generate additional heat.

How to proceed?

The affected person should be provided with a warm, sheltered environment, have their clothing replaced with dry ones, and be given warm, sweet drinks (e.g., tea). Moderate physical activity is also recommended to help the body warm up.



Moderate symptoms (32–28°C):

In this phase, shivering disappears, and the affected person becomes **drowsy and confused**, often **unaware of their surroundings**. **Hallucinations, apathy, and speech disturbances** may occur. The skin on the chest is noticeably cold, and **the pulse becomes irregular**. **The pupils are dilated**.

How to proceed?

The affected person should be placed in a lying position, their movements should be minimized, and they should be covered with multiple layers of warm clothing. External heating, such as heat packs, should be applied. It is essential to monitor vital signs and make immediate contact with a medical dispatcher, as well as arrange for transport to the hospital.



Acute symptoms (below 28°C):

The most severe form of hypothermia is characterized by **loss of consciousness, very slow and shallow breathing, and noticeably cold skin all over the body**. **The pulse becomes weak** and significantly slowed, and an additional threat is the development of pulmonary edema.

How to proceed?

The affected person should be placed in a lying position, warmed with a thermal blanket and heat packs, and an AED defibrillator should be prepared if available. If an AED is not available, CPR should be started (2-3 breaths, 30 compressions).



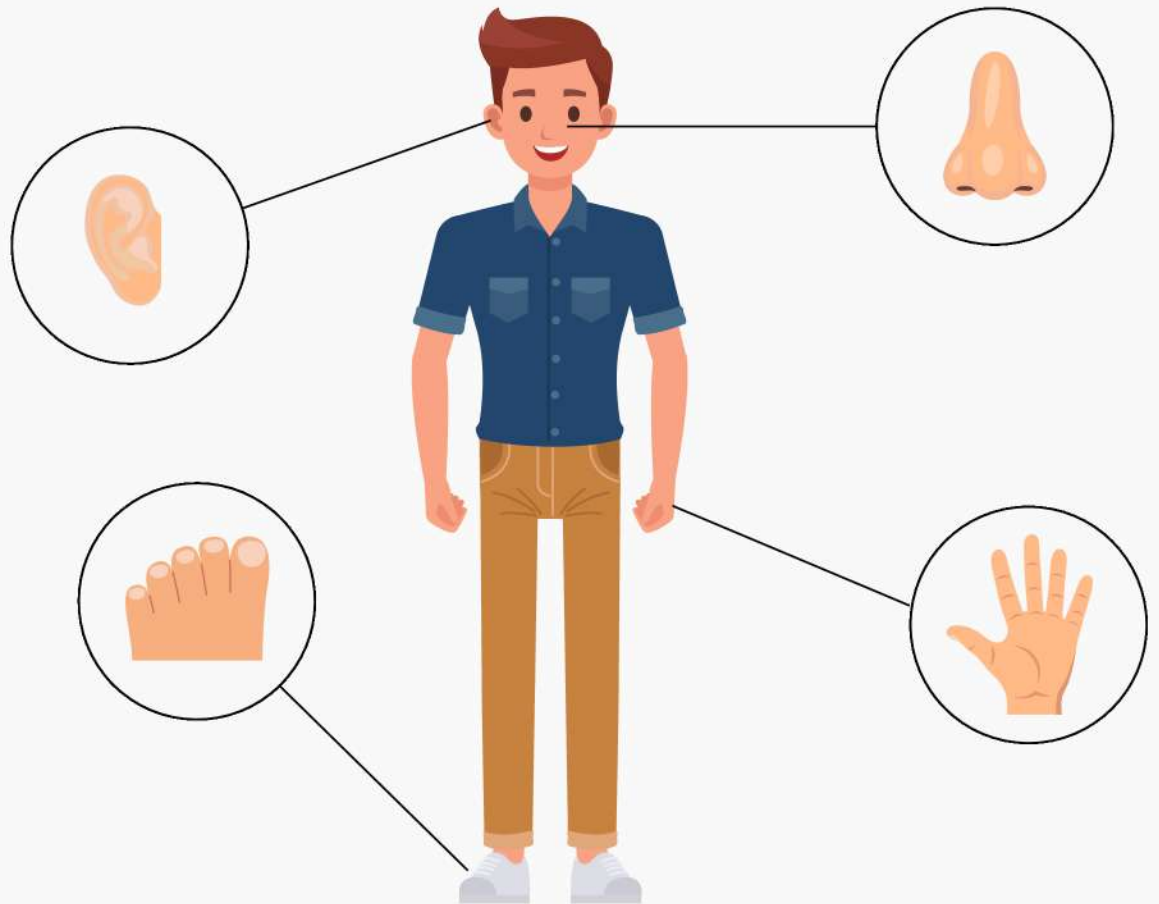


FROSTBITE



Frostbite is damage to the skin and tissues caused by exposure to low temperatures.

The most vulnerable areas are the fingers, toes, nose, ears, and cheeks.



First-degree frostbite

The skin becomes red and then pale, losing sensitivity to external stimuli.



Second-degree frostbite

Blisters filled with clear serous fluid appear on the skin, accompanied by swelling and local redness.



Third-degree frostbite

Blisters increase in volume, and their content takes on a bloody color. Signs of superficial tissue necrosis are visible.



Fourth-degree frostbite

The changes affect the deeper layers of the skin, muscles, tendons, and sometimes even bones, leading to extensive necrosis.

How to prevent frostbite?

- Dress in layers, wearing a warm hat, gloves, scarf, and insulated shoes.
- Avoid staying outside in the cold for extended periods, especially in strong winds.
- Make sure to eat and drink regularly to maintain energy and warmth.
- Wear clothing and footwear that protect against moisture.
- Pay attention to the first signs of cold and react quickly to prevent more serious consequences.



1 First aid for limb injuries

- Immobilization – in case of breakage, twisting or dislocation, use a makeshift rail made of available materials, such as a board, branch, tourist poles or rolled up jacket. It is important to limit movement at the site of the injury and prevent it from getting worse.
- Open wounds – if the injury is connected to the wound, stop the bleeding with a pressure dressing. In the case of open fractures, the wound should be protected from dirt, and protruding fragments of bone protected.



2 Head or spinal injuries

- In the case of suspected head, spinal, or skull base injury, it is crucial to immobilize the injured person to prevent further harm. Bleeding should be stopped with a sterile dressing.
- Airway patency – if the injured person is not breathing, airway patency should be restored by gently moving the jaw forward, without tilting the head backward.
- Vital signs should be continuously monitored, and if they stop, immediate cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) should be initiated.



- You should avoid transporting the victim yourself and wait for professional services.

3 Call for specialist assistance

- In the case of serious injuries or the inability to transport yourself, you should call the Ambulance Service.



4 Protection against hypothermia

- When providing first aid, the injured person should be gradually warmed: move them to a warm room, remove wet clothing, and cover them with a blanket. However, do not warm them suddenly using any devices (e.g., radiator, hot water bottle). Rubbing with snow, heating with hot air streams, or puncturing blisters are prohibited.
- The hypothermic person should be moved very carefully, as sudden movements and warming by rubbing can cause heart rhythm disturbances.
- If the person is conscious, warm fluids can be given orally. Hypothermia always requires hospitalization, so emergency medical services should be called for the hypothermic person.



The winter months present particular challenges for the body. Low temperatures, reduced sunlight, and more time spent in enclosed spaces can negatively affect mood and immunity.

TAKE CARE OF A PROPER DIET

- Vitamins and minerals – enrich your diet with foods rich in vitamins C and D (e.g. citrus fruits, fish, eggs) and minerals such as zinc (e.g. nuts, pumpkin seeds).
- Warm meals – consume hot soups, teas, and dishes based on spices such as ginger, cinnamon, or chili.
- Hydration – remember to drink water regularly, even if thirst seems less during winter.



DRESS ACCORDING TO THE WEATHER

- Layered clothing – wearing several layers of clothing allows you to adjust to changing temperatures.



- Protection of extremities – remember to wear a hat, scarf, and gloves.
- Choice of footwear – wear shoes with non-slip soles to avoid falls on icy surfaces.

STRENGTHEN IMMUNITY

- Physical activity – regular exercise, such as walking or running, strengthens the immune system.
- Proper sleep – aim for 7–8 hours of sleep per night to allow your body to recover.
- Avoid stress – stress weakens immunity, so make time for relaxation, such as yoga or reading a book.



PREVENT INFECTIONS

- Hand hygiene – wash your hands often and thoroughly to reduce the risk of viral infections.
- Ventilation – even in winter, ventilate your home regularly to improve indoor air quality.
- Avoid large crowds – as much as possible, limit your time in crowded places, especially during flu season.



TAKE CARE OF YOUR SKIN

- Protection against frost – use protective creams on your face and hands to prevent skin dryness and frostbite.



REMEMBER ABOUT SAFETY

- Be cautious of ice and slippery surfaces – move carefully to avoid falls and injuries.
- Avoid prolonged exposure to the cold – especially in strong winds and low temperatures, which can lead to hypothermia. In such conditions, the body cools down more quickly.

USE NATURAL LIGHT

- Spend time outdoors – even a short walk during the day will help replenish vitamin D levels and improve your mood.



How to take care of animals in winter?

Winter can be a challenging time for both pets and animals living outdoors. Low temperatures, snow, and frost require caregivers to take extra care of the health and safety of their animals.

PETS

- Provide warm shelter – make sure the place where the animal stays is dry and warm.
- Protection from cold – small dogs, older animals, or those with short coats may need extra protection in the form of warm clothing during walks.
- Protection for paws – after a walk, check the animal's paws – salt and chemicals used for road de-icing can irritate the pads. If necessary, use protective ointments or special boots.



OUTDOOR ANIMALS

- Warm shelter:
 - The doghouse should be well insulated, dry, and protected from the wind.





- Line the interior with insulating materials, such as straw, rather than blankets that can absorb moisture.
- Access to water and food:
 - Regularly change the water to prevent it from freezing. You can use heated bowls.
 - Provide high-energy food to help the animal maintain warmth.



WILD ANIMALS

- Ensure shelter – help cats survive the winter by building a simple insulated shelter or placing a ready-made one in a quiet, dry location.
- Check your car – before starting the engine, tap on the hood to make sure no animal has taken shelter in the engine compartment.

FARM ANIMALS

- Provide appropriate conditions in the premises – stables, barns, and henhouses should be well-ventilated but also protected from drafts and moisture.
- Ensure constant access to water and food – water must not freeze, and the feed should be adapted to the increased energy needs during the winter.



4. SAFE RECREATION

Proper clothing

Proper winter clothing is key to protection against the cold, wind, and moisture. Correctly chosen clothing not only ensures thermal comfort but also protects against frostbite and hypothermia.

Layered clothing (known as "onion layering")



I layer:

Breathable thermal underwear that wicks moisture away from the body and keeps the skin dry.



II layer:

Izolacyjna, np. polar lub sweter, który zatrzymuje ciepło przy ciele.



III layer:

Protective, waterproof, and windproof jacket or coat.



Elements of clothing



Head protection

The most heat escapes through the head, so a hat is essential. Choose a model that also covers the ears.



Neck protection

A scarf will protect the neck from the wind. Remember not to cover your face. Under the breath, the scarf will become damp, which can speed up the formation of frostbite.



Gloves

Choose warm gloves, preferably waterproof. In very low temperatures, mittens with one finger ("lobster gloves") are a better choice, as they provide better heat insulation.



Winter boots

The boots should be warm, with a thick sole and a waterproof outer layer, allowing for free movement of the toes.



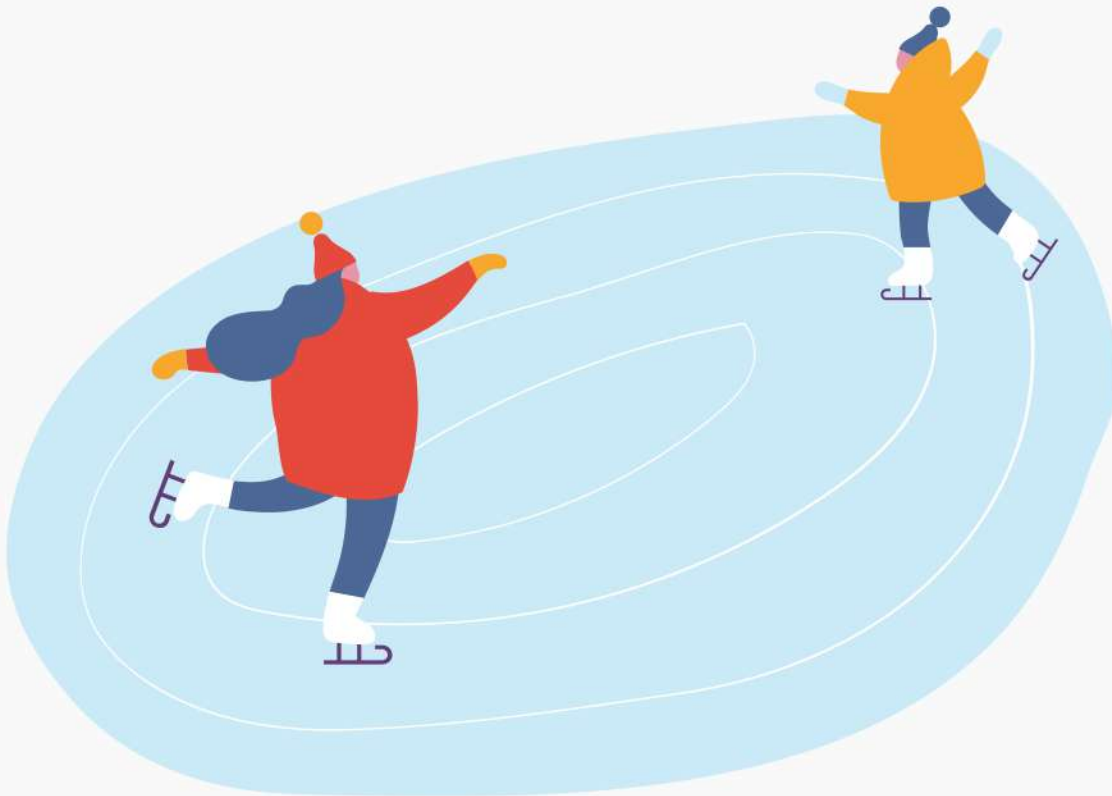
Sunglasses

They will protect your eyes from the blinding light reflected from the snow.

Ice activities

Frozen water bodies, such as ponds, lakes, or rivers, always pose a danger. Lack of caution by adults and leaving children unsupervised lead to tragic accidents every year. Despite numerous warnings from rescue services, several people lose their lives under the ice each year.

If you feel like ice skating, choose an artificial ice rink – for example, one set up on a school playground.



What to do if the ice breaks under you on a water body?



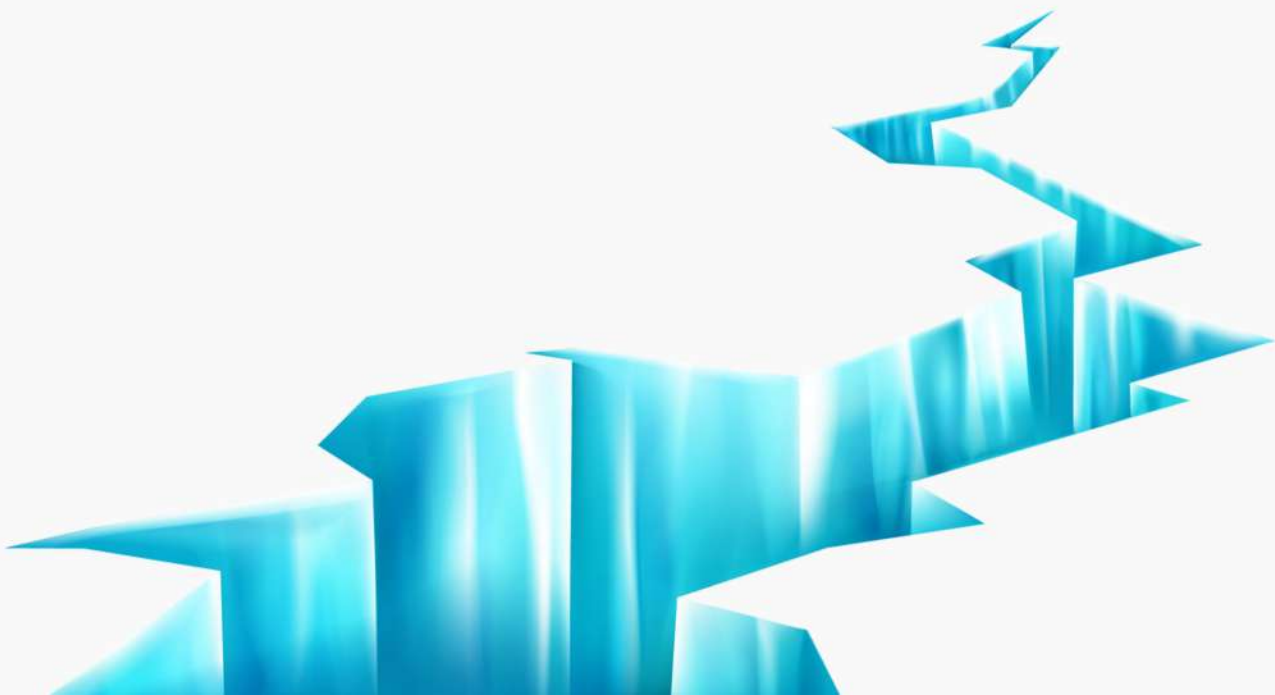
Try to remain calm and shout for help to attract the attention of others.



If possible, lie flat on the surface of the water, spreading your arms wide, and try to carefully get back onto the ice. Unfortunately, this can be very difficult. Therefore, it is better to focus on conserving your strength while waiting for help.



If possible, take off your shoes – this will reduce your weight and make it easier to stay on the surface.



When you notice a drowning person:



First, call for help – contact 112.

Remember! Your own safety is the priority. If the ice has broken under the person in need of help, there is a risk it will break under you as well. That's why it is crucial to call professionals who are properly trained for such situations.

When providing assistance, do not run towards the person in need, as this increases the pressure on the ice and may cause it to break. It is best to crawl towards the drowning person.

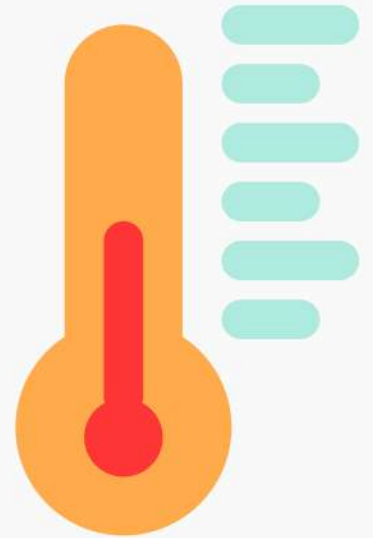


If you have a long object on hand, such as a scarf, a thick branch, or a sled, use it to reach out to the victim, maintaining a safe distance.





After pulling the person out of the water, if possible, remove their wet clothes and cover them with something warm, such as a coat or jacket. Quickly move them to a warm room to prevent further cooling of the body.



Until the emergency services arrive, regularly check the condition of the injured person. If necessary, begin cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).



If the victim is conscious, give him warm (but not hot) and sweet drinks, necessarily non-alcoholic.



**ENTERING ONTO ICE
ALWAYS PUTS YOUR LIFE
AT RISK!**

Sledding

Sledding is one of the most popular winter activities, bringing lots of joy to both children and adults. However, to ensure that the rides are not only fun but also safe, it's important to follow a few basic rules.



Choosing the right location

- Choose hills that are far from roads, parking lots, and other areas where vehicles move.
- Ensure that the area is free of obstacles such as trees, rocks, or poles.
- The ideal place for sledding is a flat area at the end of the slope, which allows for a safe stop.

Safe equipment

- Only use functional sleds. Check for sharp edges or damage.
- Sleds with a steering mechanism and brakes offer better control during the ride.

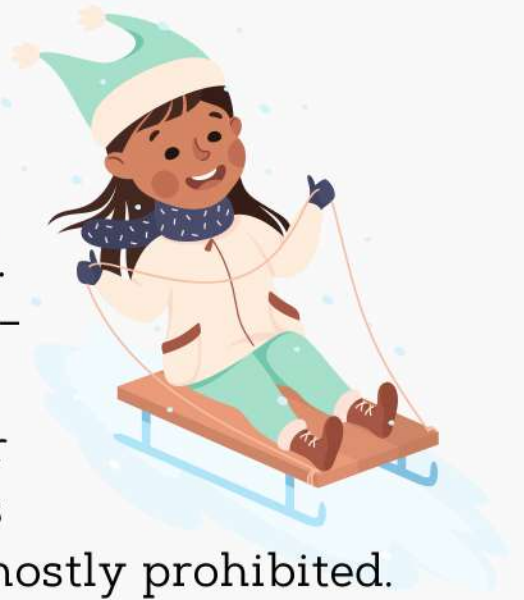
Proper clothing

- Dress warmly in layers to protect yourself from the cold.
- Always wear gloves and a hat. Everyone (especially children) should consider wearing a helmet, which will provide additional protection for the head in case of a fall.



Safety rules for sledding

- Sledge only in a sitting position – riding on your stomach is more dangerous.
- Do not sled in large groups – this can lead to collisions.
- Do not tow sleds with motor vehicles (car/quad) – this is extremely dangerous and mostly prohibited.
- After sledding, quickly move off the track to make room for others.



Sleigh ride

- Organize the sleigh ride only in a safe area, away from roads and vehicle traffic – preferably on private land (field, meadow, forest).
- The sleds should be connected with a solid, short, and strong rope to prevent them from disconnecting during the ride.



Skiing and snowboarding

Skiing and snowboarding are some of the most popular winter activities, combining sport, recreation, and the joy of being in a mountainous environment. To fully enjoy winter adventures, it's important to keep in mind proper preparation and safety rules.

Skiing

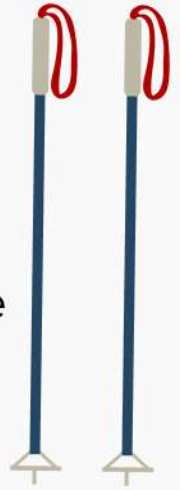
Choice of the right location

- Choose trails suited to your skill level – from blue (easy) to red (intermediate) to black (advanced).
- Check the conditions on the slopes and avoid going off-piste, especially in unfamiliar areas.
- Pay attention to trail markings and use ski resort maps.



Proper equipment

- Choose skis that are appropriate for your height, weight, and skill level.
- Check the bindings – they should be properly adjusted to ensure safety in case of a fall.
- Use ski poles of the correct length to help maintain balance.

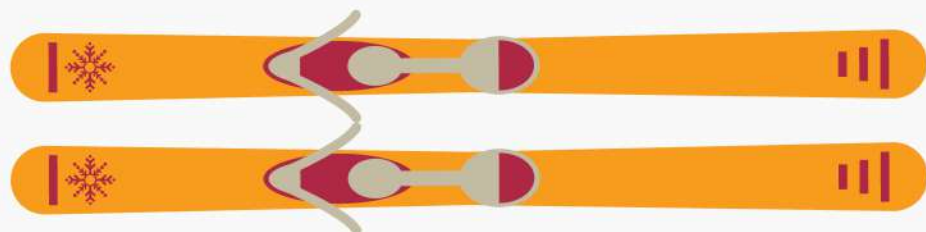


Safety rules

- Ski in a controlled manner, adjusting your speed to your abilities and the conditions on the slope.
- Stop only in clearly visible and safe areas.
- Give priority to people below you on the slope.

Clothing

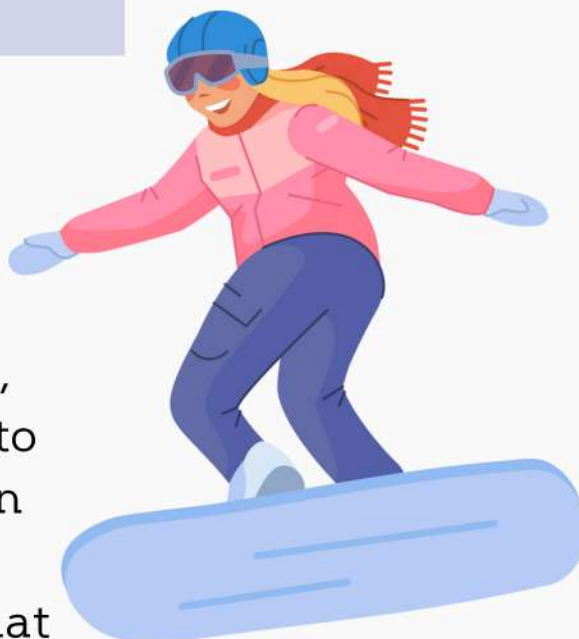
- Wear breathable, waterproof, and windproof ski clothing.
- Don't forget the helmet and ski goggles, which improve visibility and protect your eyes from UV radiation and snow.



Snowboard

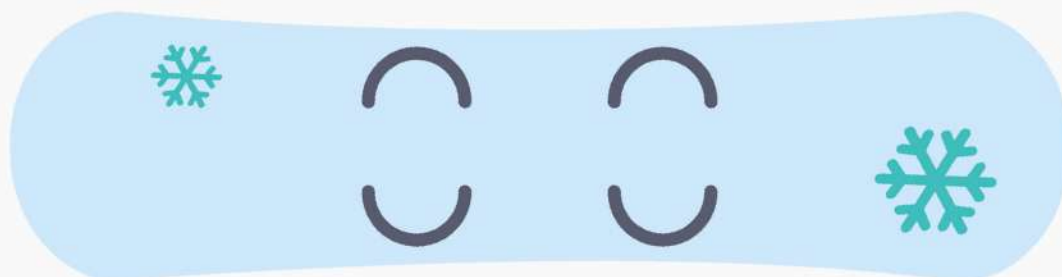
Proper location selection

- Choose slopes that match your skill level.
- Avoid riding off the trails, especially in areas prone to avalanches or with hidden obstacles.
- Practice on wide slopes that make learning turns and controlling the board easier.



Proper equipment

- Choose a snowboard suited to your weight, height, and riding style (freestyle, freeride, all-mountain).
- Set the bindings in the appropriate position – beginners usually use the "duck stance" (angle -15° and 15°).
- Wear a helmet and wrist guards to protect against injuries during falls.



Safety rules

- Before starting your ride, make sure the strap on the front foot binding is fastened, especially when using lifts.
- Control your speed and direction, especially on crowded slopes.
- Do not stop in places that are not visible to other users, such as behind hills.

Clothing

- Wear waterproof and breathable snowboard clothing that allows freedom of movement.
- Make sure to wear goggles to protect your eyes and improve visibility in changing weather conditions.



Winter swimming

Winter swimming, or cold water immersion, is an activity that is gaining popularity due to its health benefits and unique experiences. However, to safely enjoy this form of activity, it is important to remember a few key rules.



Health benefits of winter swimming:

- Stress reduction and antidepressant effects – winter swimming improves mood, alleviates negative emotions, and helps cope with tension.
- Better metabolism – it accelerates fat burning and supports the proper functioning of the metabolic system.
- Improved skin condition and circulation – better circulation positively affects skin health and appearance.
- Pain relief for joints – regular winter swimming can improve range of motion and reduce joint pain.



Contraindications

Winter swimming is not suitable for everyone, and it is advisable to consult a doctor before starting, especially in the case of heart conditions, hypothyroidism, epilepsy, or cold intolerance. Cold water baths are also not recommended for pregnant women, young children, people with infections, fever, or after consuming alcohol.

How to prepare?

- **Health:** Before starting, consult a doctor, especially if you have heart, circulation, or respiratory issues..
- **Gradual adaptation:** Start with shorter periods in cold water, gradually increasing the duration with each subsequent dip.
- **Warm-up:** Before entering the water, perform a warm-up – jogging, jumping jacks, or light dynamic exercises.
- **Proper attire:** Wear a swimsuit, a cap to protect your head, and neoprene shoes to protect your feet from the cold and sharp stones.



5. PREPARING YOUR HOME FOR WINTER

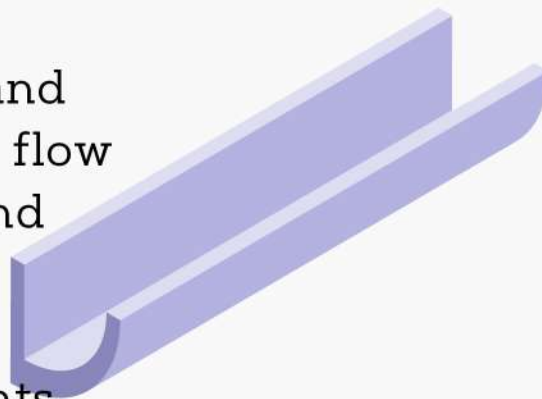
Roof check

Before winter, it is worth thoroughly checking the condition of the roof, especially in older buildings or after storms and high winds. Make sure there are no damages, such as displaced tiles, holes in the roofing felt, or corrosion on metal sheets, and repair them to avoid leaks. In the case of flat roofs, it is recommended to protect them with construction film, which will safeguard the surface during snow removal.



Gutter cleaning

Before winter, it is important to clean the gutters of leaves and other debris to ensure the free flow of water from melting snow and to avoid damage from freezing water. It is also worth checking the gutter attachments, the condition of connections, and the condition of roof accessories, such as snow guards and roof tear-offs.



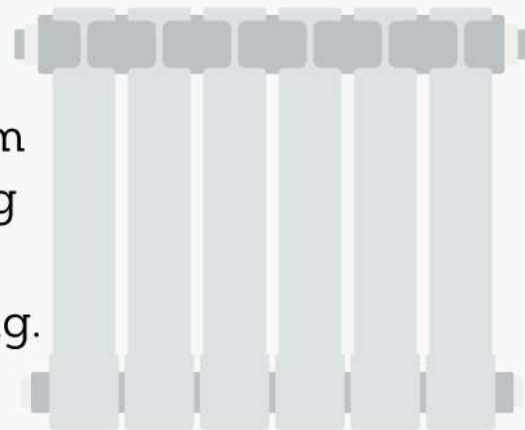
Control of chimneys and ventilation

In homes heated with solid fuels, such as coal or wood, it is important to check the condition of chimneys and ventilation grilles. An annual chimney inspection should be carried out, and the chimney should be cleaned at least once a quarter to avoid the risk of fire (as soot can catch fire in the chimney) or carbon monoxide poisoning. It is also crucial to clean the ventilation grilles of dust and grease to ensure proper airflow.



Checking the heating system

Before the heating season, make sure your heating system is running smoothly, including a stove, controllers and radiators, or underfloor heating. If you use a heat pump, recuperation or air conditioning in heating mode, check the cleanliness of the grilles and perform their fumigation, if necessary.



Preparing the surroundings

- **Protect garden furniture**

Store it in the garage or cover it with waterproof covers.

- **Prepare road salt and sand**

In case of slippery surfaces on the driveway or sidewalk.

- **Drain water from the garden system**

Turn off the valves and empty the hoses and outdoor taps.

Checking alarm systems

- **Check alarms and smoke detectors**

The risk of fires increases in winter due to heating devices.

- **Install a carbon monoxide detector**

This is especially important if you use a fireplace, stove, or solid fuel boiler.

Be ready for a crash

- **Secure an emergency power source**

Consider purchasing a generator in case of power outages.

- **Prepare backup lighting and batteries**

Candles, flashlights, power banks, and spare batteries may come in handy.



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