

Security Spotlight



An informational Guide for Securitas Canada Clients and Employees

January 2014

Securitas Canada Limited

Number 118

Weathering Winter Storms



Winter has arrived. Bitter cold, driving winds and snow have hit nearly every region of the country. Winter storms can bring cities to a halt, snarling roadways, closing airports and disrupting services. But severe winter weather is more than just inconvenient; it can be dangerous.

Car accidents account for about 70 percent of injuries and death that occur during winter storms; another 25 percent result from people getting caught out in a storm. Here are some tips to guard against the two major causes of injury and death associated with winter storms.

Driving in the Snow

The best way to avoid a car accident is to stay off the road. If you must drive in winter conditions, prepare before you go. Make sure car lights, breaks, windshield wipers and battery are in

working order. Check your antifreeze and install winter tires with good treads. Maintain at least a half tank of gas for emergency use and to keep the fuel line from freezing. Carry an emergency preparedness kit and keep your cell phone charged.

Always wear your seat belt. And never drink and drive. Travel in the day, try not to drive alone and keep others informed of your route and schedule. Listen to the radio for the latest road conditions. Stay on main roads whenever possible. And don't overestimate your ability to drive in bad conditions like sleet, freezing rain, freezing drizzle and dense fog. Be aware that bridges, ramps and overpasses may freeze first.

Turn on your lights to see and be seen. Slow down and put extra distance between you and the car in front of you. If you need to stop, know what your brakes will do: In general, press firmly on

anti-lock brakes and keep the pedal depressed (even if it begins to shake). Pump non-antilock brakes to avoid locking your wheels and causing the car to slide. If your car starts to slide, turn your wheels in the direction of the skid to straighten out.

Caught Out in a Winter Storm

To avoid being stranded out in a storm, listen for winter storm or blizzard warnings—and stay inside when they are issued. If you are caught outdoors, find shelter as soon as possible. Stay dry and cover all body parts. If there is no shelter available, build a wind-break or snow cave for protection.

Light a fire for heat and to attract attention. Eat and drink to retain energy (body heat) and avoid dehydration. But, don't eat snow; it will lower your body temperature. Instead, melt it for drinking water.

If you are stranded in your car or truck:

Stay inside the vehicle: Do not set out on foot unless you can see a building close by. Be careful; Blowing-snow distorts distances and disorientation occurs quickly. Run the motor about 10 minutes each hour for heat. When the engine is running, open a window for fresh air to avoid carbon monoxide poisoning. Make sure the exhaust pipe is not blocked.

Make yourself visible: Turn on the dome light at night when running the engine. Tie a colored cloth (red is best) to the antenna or door. After snow stops falling, raise the hood to signal you need help.

Be Prepared

The best protection against the hazards of winter storms is to be prepared. Visit these sites for additional information:

<http://www.publicsafety.gc.ca>

<http://weather.gc.ca>

Cold Stress Illness

Prolonged exposure to cold can result in frostbite and hypothermia.

Frostbite is a severe reaction to cold exposure. It occurs when the skin freezes and loses water. Frostbite typically affects the feet and hands. Stinging or aching followed by numbness and white or pale skin are signs of frostbite. If you suspect frostbite, do not rub the area to warm it. Wrap it in soft warm cloth, move the person to a warm area, and contact medical personnel.

Hypothermia is a dangerous lowering of the body's core temperature and occurs when the body loses heat faster than it can produce it. Warning signs include uncontrollable shivering, mental confusion, slowed speech, loss of coordination, drowsiness and exhaustion. If you suspect hypothermia, get the person to a warm location and call for emergency medical help. Start warming the body slowly. Change into dry clothing and wrap entire body in warm blankets, covering the head. Warm the core first. Do not give alcohol or caffeinated beverages. Give a warm (not hot) sugary drink or warm broth instead. These procedures are not substitutes for proper medical care.