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## **AG SAFETY S.T.A.T. – SAFE TACTICS FOR AG TODAY**

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### **THOUGHTS from the EDITOR – IT'S STILL WINTER**

#### **Dee Jepsen, State Safety Leader**

If you agree with the weather forecasting ability of the ground hog, then you know that winter will linger in Ohio. Although the Farmer's Almanac called for an early spring in 2009, the ground hog returned to his hole to sleep for six more weeks during this cold winter weather.

What does that mean for us? Well, more reminders of what we need to be doing to stay safe during winter months. And even though we may be experiencing a slight break from the frigid cold, it is still winter in Ohio.

### **SAFETY TIPS for WINTER**

Here are the top ten safety factors for surviving Ohio winters:

1. *Heating System Maintenance:* Make sure your home heating system is in good working order. Change furnace filters as needed. If using any type of wood burning system, have the chimney and flue inspected and cleaned to ensure that creosote build-up is removed. Never use gasoline in a kerosene heater - it could explode.
2. *Car Maintenance:* Winterize your car by making sure all mechanicals are in proper working order, fluids are topped off, and tire tread is at least 1/16 of an inch.
3. *At Home:* Keep on hand non-perishable food items, a few days supply of drinking water, and required medications. Also have candles, matches, flashlight and extra batteries, manual can opener, first aid kit, and extra blankets.
4. *In the Car:* Keep an emergency kit containing the same items as mentioned to keep on hand at home. Add the following items to the kit: flares, matches, reflective triangles, jumper cables, instant tire inflator, windshield deicer, windshield washer fluid, anti-freeze, small shovel, ice scraper, "help" sign, lock lubricant, sand or kitty litter for traction, and a water-proof cover such as a tarp.
5. *Winter Driving:* Maintain a distance of three vehicle lengths between you and the car in front of you. Do not use cruise control. If you have anti-lock brakes apply steady pressure. If you have standard brakes, gently pump. If you begin to slide, remove foot from accelerator and steer in the direction you are sliding. If you become stuck in snow, make sure your exhaust pipe is clear of snow and debris, put out flares if safety permits, run the engine in only 10 minute intervals with a window slightly opened.
6. *Recognize Physical Distress:* Know the symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning, hypothermia, and frostbite. If you experience these symptoms - seek medical attention immediately!
  - Carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning can be lethal! Symptoms of CO poisoning are headache, fatigue, dizziness, shortness of breath, and unconsciousness. If you experience the first three symptoms, get fresh air right away and contact a doctor for proper diagnosis. If you find someone unconscious in a house or car that is closed-up, ventilate the area so you don't also become ill. Relocate the individual to fresh air, and call 911.
  - Hypothermia can be deadly! Symptoms include shivering and exhaustion, confusion, memory loss/slurred speech, and drowsiness. Symptoms in infants include bright red, cold skin and very low energy. Because hypothermia affects thought processes, it is often another person who recognizes these symptoms rather than the affected individual.

- Symptoms of frostbite include the skin turning white or grayish-yellow in color, skin feeling unusually firm or waxy, and numbness. Due to the numbness, it is often someone other than the individual who notices these changes.
7. *Warning Devices:* Install smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors near bedrooms and on each floor of your home.
  8. *Generators:* Generators are only to be used out of doors and in well-ventilated areas. Do not use in a garage, under an overhang or carport, or near windows or doors. Do not overload the capacity of the generator. Never plug a generator into a household outlet. Rather, plug the appliances that will be running off the generator into the outlets on the generator and using outdoor rated power cords.
  9. *Work and Play:* When working and playing outdoors, dress in layers so your body can breathe and clothing won't become damp. Do not block your vision or make it difficult for you to hear what is going on around you. Wear waterproof boots with non-skid soles. Wear something bright or adhere reflective tape to your garments.
  10. *Don't Forget Your Pets:* Just like people, animals can experience hypothermia and frost bite. Keep ice balls from forming on your animals paws by trimming excess hair and applying cooking spray before heading outside. And, if your pet walks on salted sidewalks, be sure to wash the paws to remove this irritant. More tips specifically for pets can be found at <http://www.i-pets.com/rpet1.html>

## **FARM SAFETY DAY CAMPS**

We are currently seeking counties to host a Farm Safety Round-Up in 2009. These day camps provide youth an opportunity to learn about agricultural hazards and injury prevention. The mission of the day camp program is to teach youth about rural dangers; however the campers do not have to be farm children to benefit from the educational sessions. Injuries from horses, livestock, ponds, lawn mowers and electricity can occur to anyone, not just farm kids. Campers learn in a fun, interactive way the consequences of poor judgment around power machinery, flowing grain, and livestock. To date, approximately 15,000 youth have enrolled in this statewide event over the past 11 years!

Farm Safety Round-Ups are cooperative partnerships between Ohio State University Extension, Ohio Farm Bureau, Our Ohio, Nationwide Insurance Enterprise and the Ohio 4-H Foundation. These programs serve as ideal conduits between businesses and community organizations interested in the health and safety of local youth. Many agencies use the Round-Up program to benefit their own outreach education efforts. For example, local electric co-ops have dynamic electric safety presentations, the YMCA has excellent water safety/water rescue programs, and health departments have a variety of health programs targeting younger audiences.

For more information about hosting a day camp, including the benefits and goodies sponsored at the state level, please contact Kathy Henwood, OSUE Agricultural Safety & Health Program Assistant, at [henwood.13@osu.edu](mailto:henwood.13@osu.edu) or 614-292-0622.

## **ARTICLE of the MONTH – SNOW REMOVAL, A SHOVEL FULL of SAFETY**

### **Tim Butcher, OSHA Program Coordinator**

Many cities in Ohio require that homeowners keep their sidewalks free of snow. Regardless of whether it's required by law, many people choose to remove the snow from their sidewalks. This can lead many sedentary people to undertake a physical activity for which they are not really prepared. According to the American Journal of Cardiology, snow removal can be classified as an extremely vigorous exercise with heart rates reaching 175 beats/min and systolic blood pressure approaching 200 mm Hg. These cardiac levels are extremely hazardous for those with heart conditions. People with known heart conditions should consult their physician before undertaking any physical activities, including shoveling snow.

Snow removal can be an excellent way to get some much-needed activity during the winter months. Thirty minutes of shoveling sidewalks can clear away 200 calories in addition to quite a bit of snow. Following some simple guidelines can keep it healthy.

- The body naturally constricts arteries and blood vessels when exposed to cold. This increases the effort the heart must make to move blood throughout the body. Remember to dress in layers to maintain a comfortable body temperature. A hat is critical to preserve warmth. Gloves will preserve warmth as well as protect against abrasions.
- Going from a sedentary lifestyle to shoveling a sidewalk or driveway can easily cause strains. A shovel loaded about 10 times a minute with 16 pounds of snow ends up being 160 pounds of snow per minute. After 10 minutes of shoveling that's 1600 pounds. Stretch and loosen up before starting. Take frequent breaks, removing the snow from the driveway and sidewalk is not a race.
- Pick the right shovel. Whether the snow is lightweight or heavy, loose or packed makes a difference in which shovel works best. Small bladed shovels are much better with wet and packed snow. The wider snow shovels should only really be used when the snow is lightweight.
- Lift with the legs, not the back. Avoid twisting to throw the snow. Step in the direction that the snow is being thrown. This will help alleviate back soreness typically experienced the day after a hard shoveling job.
- If the snow is deep, remove a few inches at a time. Lighter loads can be placed further away and are less likely to fall back into the area being cleared.
- When sweating, it's as easy to become dehydrated in the winter as it is in the summer. Drink enough liquids and avoid caffeine. Like cold weather, caffeine constricts arteries and blood vessels and makes the heart work harder. To warm up take a break and try some hot chocolate.
- Clearing snow can be a good source of exercise during the winter months. Keeping sidewalks clear can make slips, trips and falls far less likely, but if it's not done safely can lead to injuries or worse.

Take the time to prepare and choose the right tools and make the chore of snow removal a much more pleasant experience.

## **EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT TIP of the MONTH**

### **Aletha Reshan, Emergency Management Planning and Education Program Coordinator**

Working and playing outdoors during winter months entails taking special safety precautions to protect our bodies from the impact of prolonged exposure to cold weather. Two of the most common health concerns are hypothermia and frostbite. Both of these concerns can have serious affects on children and adults, therefore it is important to recognize the symptoms of distress and actions to take if you or someone you know is affected.

Hypothermia is abnormally low body temperature. The cause of hypothermia is exposure to very cold temperatures or becoming chilled from rain, sweat, or submersion in cold water at cool temperatures. When the core body temperature is low the brain is also affected which makes it difficult for the individual to think clearly in making decisions. Therefore, the individual may not even recognize their body's distress.

Symptoms of hypothermia in adults includes shivering and exhaustion; confusion; memory loss/slurred speech; and drowsiness. Symptoms in infants include bright red, cold skin and very low energy.

Actions you can take if you suspect that you or another person is exhibiting symptoms of hypothermia begin with taking the individual's temperature. A body temperature below 95 degrees indicates an emergency and medical assistance is needed immediately. If medical assistance is unavailable, move the individual to a warm area; remove wet clothing; warm the center of the body (chest, neck, head, groin) first with either an electric blanket or skin-to-skin contact under dry, loose layers of whatever kind of materials are available; give warm, non-alcoholic beverages if the individual is conscious; continue warming even after the individual's temperature has increase; obtain medical care as soon as possible. If the individual is unconscious or appears dead, administer CPR until medics arrive. Hypothermia victims who appear dead may sometimes be resuscitated.

Frostbite occurs when a portion of the body becomes frozen. Frostbite can permanently damage the affected area with severe cases requiring amputation. For those with reduced blood circulation or not adequately dressed for very cold temperatures the risk of frostbite increases. The wind chill factor contributes dramatically to the length of time the body can withstand cold weather. The wind chill factor is the temperature the air feels like when it is

combined with wind speed. The faster the wind speed the faster body heat is carried away. The combination of exposed skin and wind chill decreases the time it takes for frostbite to occur.

Symptoms of frostbite include the skin turning white or grayish-yellow in color; skin feeling unusually firm or waxy; and numbness. Due to the numbness, it is often someone other than the individual who notices these changes.

Actions to take if you notice symptoms of frostbite begin with seeking medical care. If medical care is not available, determine if the individual is suffering from hypothermia as that also results from exposure and is life threatening. If hypothermia is not an issue, treat the frostbite by moving the individual to a warm room; immerse the affected area in warm, not hot, water; and use body heat to warm the affected area such as placing frostbitten fingers under the arm. Do not walk on frostbitten feet; apply snow, heating pad, heat lamp or other heat sources such as a stove, fireplace or radiator; or massage the frostbitten area - all of these activities will cause additional damage!

A wind chill chart can be viewed at: <http://www.nws.noaa.gov/om/windchill/>

The chart demonstrates how quickly frostbite can occur in extremely cold temperatures. It is important to dress appropriately and take rest periods during work and play to check clothing for dampness and bodies for adverse affects. Developing hypothermia or frostbite is not a pleasant way to spend a winter day!

For more information on cold weather safety, please visit the Center for Disease Control at <http://emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/winter/staysafe/hypothermia.asp>.

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*Ag Safety S.T.A.T. - Safe Tactics for Ag Today* is an e-mail newsletter prepared by Dee Jepsen, Extension Agricultural Safety Specialist and team members from the State Safety Office, in the Department of Food, Agricultural and Biological Engineering at OSU. The primary goal of this monthly newsletter is to help you stay connected to everyday safety news and activities that may be used in your own newsletters or programs. If you have safety-related questions or program ideas that you would like to share, please contact Dr. Jepsen at [jepsen.4@osu.edu](mailto:jepsen.4@osu.edu)  
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