

# Cold Weather Safety Tips for Homeowners

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With freezing temperatures and our recent snowfall bring hazards both natural and man-made. Preparations and awareness of your surrounding will keep you and your family from a potential injury. This is doubly true for senior citizens who could break a wrist or a hip in a simple fall on a slippery surface.

Let's start with the outside of your home. You may have heard the term "black ice" used to describe icy roadways. That term can also be used to describe that near-invisible sheen covering your front step and walkway. We saw this condition recently on October 30th. If we have some precipitation especially overnight never assume that those sidewalks and driveways aren't icy, even if you didn't have an ice storm overnight. If you're unsure about whether or not the sidewalk is slippery, walk slowly and cautiously with your feet pointing outward. This position actually helps you brace yourself better, and it helps protect you to some degree in the event that you slip and fall. Salt, sand and kitty litter spread over the surface can provide extra traction however it is better to avoid the ice until it melts.

The National Safety Council recommends avoiding wearing high-heeled shoes or boots outside. Instead, wear flat shoes with slip resistant soles or rain/snow boots; both of these provide you with some degree of traction.

Most early snowfalls in Northern Colorado are dry light snow but there are always those snowfalls with wet heavy snows especially in spring. Scooping up heavy piles of that snow is hard work for your back muscles. Impatience or over enthusiasm can cause you to pull a muscle or suffer from nagging backaches. Shoveling "pros" recommend that homeowners use curved shovels versus flat ones; they retain snow more effectively. And select a shovel that is of reasonable weight. If it's slightly smaller than the other ones in the hardware store, sure, it might take you longer to do the job. But if you're continually lifting a heavy shovel, you could hurt yourself. Make sure that as you're lifting your snow-filled shovel, you're bending your knees. Don't twist your back and toss the snow over your shoulder. That movement, when repeated continuously, will promote backaches. It is physically strenuous work, so take frequent breaks. Avoid overexertion.

In the event of a major storm, such we had last March, prepare a winter storm kit

- Have extra blankets on hand.
- Ensure that each member of your household has a warm coat, gloves or mittens, hat, and water-resistant boots.
- First aid kit and essential medications.
- Battery-powered radio, flashlight, and extra batteries.
- Canned food and can opener.
- Bottled water (at least one gallon of water per person per day to last at least 3 days).
- Extra warm clothing, including boots, mittens, and a hat.
- A safe alternative heat source such as a fireplace, stove or kerosene heater. Your barbeque is not a safe source.

During winter emergencies most fire departments see an increase in the number of call for carbon monoxide poisoning due to poorly vented fireplaces and improvised heaters. Install a carbon monoxide detector on each floor with bedrooms. Make sure at a minimum you have a smoke detector on each floor of your home and it works!! The current standard is to have a smoke detector inside each bedroom as well. Change the batteries bi-annually even if they are AC/DC. A few 9 volt batteries are cheap insurance in comparison to the loss of a loved one.

Rick Bunzel is the Principle Inspector at Mountain View Property Inspections. If you would like to know more about safety in your home go to **[WWW.MVPinspection.com](http://WWW.MVPinspection.com)** If you have questions or comments, Rick Bunzel can be contacted at Mountain View Property Inspections @ 303-443-9063 or [MVPInspection@attbi.com](mailto:MVPInspection@attbi.com)