

Winter Safety and Preparedness

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Last week we looked at preparing our equipment for winter. This week we will look at getting our homes and family ready as well.

Old Man Winter has already started knocking on our door. Now is the time to ready our homes for winter, if you have not already done so.

Furnaces, wood stoves and other heating devices need to be checked before winter comes on full force. Chimneys need to be cleaned and examined for cracks and defects. This is especially true for chimneys venting wood stoves as creosote causes more house fires each year than are often realized. Back up heat sources such as "Kero-Sun" type heaters need to have their wicks inspected and possibly adjusted or replaced if they show excessive wear as these devices vent indoors they are especially likely candidates to release carbon-monoxide into your living environment if they malfunction. Be sure to keep only K-1 kerosene on hand to fill these heaters as 'fuel oil' grade kerosene will increase fumes and the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning.

Back up electrical sources such as generators need to be checked and readied for use now before power failures strike. Have a safe place to store your supplies of gasoline and kerosene away from heat and ignition sources and ALWAYS make sure they are plainly marked in proper/approved storage containers. Kerosene if mistaken poured into your generator will keep the generator from functioning. Gasoline added to a "Kero-Sun" heater is a tragedy in the making!!! All extension cords need to also be checked for wear and replaced if needed. Electrical tape over damaged insulation is asking for trouble.

If you have not previously done so, begin taking advantage of holiday sales to stock up on canned goods and other items that do not require cooking. Likewise remember to store fresh or check existing stores of drinking water. Get your family preparedness kit into shape now before the big snow/ice storm catches you unaware. While you are at it, review your family disaster plan with all family members.

Check your vehicles to make sure that they are winterized and ready for sub-zero weather and adverse driving conditions. Now is a good time to get those new snow tires or all-season radials instead of waiting as many do until the weather forecast calls for a "BIG ONE" in a day or two. Don't forget to put some non-perishable food items, extra clothes and a blanket in your car in case you get stuck away from home and stores.

The holidays are here and with them come decorating and festivities. When putting up lights and other decorations remember to check any electrical wiring for breaks and replace any light strings showing wear. Most holiday lights are under \$10.00 and cost less to replace than would your home if a fire should be started from an old set. Be careful of live trees as they need fresh water daily and lights etc. accelerate the process of drying out the moisture in the tree. I seriously question the ability of live trees that have been up since early/mid November remaining safe through January 1.

Let's all be ready to survive the cold days ahead so that we will all be here safe and sound to greet the spring in 2001.