

Winter Weather entices more than making snow angels

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Most cold weather risk factors are the result of the measures taken to keep warm and not the direct result of exposure to cold temperatures.

Winter weather does not have to be sub-zero to be dangerous; it just has to be cold enough to make a person feel cold.

Just remember the four Ps:

Protect People: This includes yourself, but pay careful attention to children and the elderly. They are especially vulnerable to cold and the least able to protect themselves. Dress in layers of loose-fitting warm clothing. This will allow for the shedding of appropriate layers once the day becomes warmer. When outdoors, wear a hat that covers the ears. A person loses as much as 40 percent body heat through the head.

Protect Plants: Bring potted plants indoors. Keep outdoor plants and trees watered. Remember, dry weather and wind creates the perfect conditions for brush fires. For those who live near heavily forested or undeveloped land, keep property grounds well-manicured and free of dry or dead vegetation.

Protect Pets: Bring all pets indoors. Pets that must be left outside should have an enclosed shelter with the entrance facing away from the wind.

Protect against fires in the home: This one of the most important winter considerations. Take the time to prepare and inspect heating equipment before using. According to the National Fire Protection Association, incorrect use of heating equipment is the leading cause of home fires.

Most home fires in the winter are associated with portable heating equipment that is poorly installed, poorly maintained or misused. Use central heating whenever possible. If the use of a portable space heater is necessary, follow some basic safety guidelines.

Choose electric space heaters and use only those that are UL approved. Look for models that include safety features such as an automatic shut-off when tipped over.

Avoid the use of extension cords with space heaters. If needed, ensure that it is the proper size and length. Never run cords under rugs or carpets.

Keep the heater at least three feet away from furniture, curtains and other flammable items.

Install recommended smoke and carbon monoxide detectors and replace batteries regularly.

Never use charcoal or other fuel-burning devices indoors, such as grills that produce carbon monoxide.

Make sure all equipment is clean and dust free.

Keep a close eye on children and pets whenever a space heater is being used.

And always turn off heaters when leaving home.

Wintertime can be a fun and beautiful time for spending time indoors with loved ones or outside enjoying the brisk air and snowy scenery. With just a few precautions, the beauty of the season will not be marred by avoidable disasters.

Source: Firewise and Oklahoma Department of Forestry.

Other resources: www.firewise.org, www.fs.fed.us, www.fema.gov and www.state.ok.us.