

Winter Preparations

by Brenda Sangster



Winter is fast approaching, and as caregivers we may have concerns about our loved one's ability to navigate the challenges of the season. Falls are always a concern but especially when going outside in the winter. Here are few safety tips to consider.

1. Make sure all railings and steps are in good repair and cleared of snow. Use salt or sand regularly, and have extra on hand throughout the season. Keep driveways, sidewalks, walkways, and mailboxes cleared of snow, ice, and slush, and use sand/salt liberally.
2. Wear proper footwear for the conditions and consider using a cane with a pick (especially in icy conditions). When using mobility aids outside, look for grippers for shoes/boots.
3. If you and the person you are caring for are driving, make sure your vehicle is winter ready (e.g., oil changes, good winter tires, battery, extra windshield wiper fluid, snowbrush).
4. Make sure you have a winter emergency kit in the vehicle. Items to include in a winter emergency car kit are: first aid supplies, water and non-perishable food, blankets, extra clothes, change of footwear, shovel, cat litter or sand, a flashlight, batteries, road flares, heat packets, emergency phone battery charger, waterproof matches and candles, swiss army knife, jumper cables, and rope.

Winter may also be a good time to assess if the person you are caring for is safe and comfortable driving in less than desirable conditions.

It's also a good idea to have a winter emergency kit for the household in the event of a power outage. Items to include in a household winter emergency kit are: water, food (non-perishable), cash, manual can opener, at least one week's supply of medication(s), baby needs, extra glasses, important family documents (e.g., copies of birth and marriage certificates, passports, licenses, wills, land deeds, and insurance), a copy of your emergency exit plan, crank or battery-operated flashlight and radio, extra batteries, extra keys for your house and car, a first aid kit, personal hygiene items, pet food and medication, and a cell phone with extra charger or battery pack.

Automatic delivery of heating oil can help ensure you never run out. The Heating Assistance Rebate Program (HARP) helps low-income Nova Scotians with the cost of home heating. Rebates range from \$100 to \$200. To learn more visit: <http://bit.ly/2XSLSw8>

If you or a loved one are house-bound and need support, there are mobile resources available such as bloodwork, meal or grocery delivery, footcare, etc. Call us here at Caregivers Nova Scotia at 1.877.488.7390 or visit our website at www.CaregiversNS.org for a list of those and other resources.