

SafetyCanada

THE MEMBER NEWSLETTER OF THE CANADA SAFETY COUNCIL

JANUARY 2023

VOL. LXVI No. 1

Working Safely in the Cold



Working in cold conditions can be, to put it mildly, uncomfortable. Adding to the usual stresses of manual labour, the winter months bring a wide array of health and safety concerns including frostbite, dehydration, hypothermia, numbness, and overexertion.

Winter working is a task that has to be treated with respect and a healthy dose of planning. Read on as we explore some tips to mitigate the risks associated with winter activity.

- 1. Stay well-rested.** As with most activities where risk is involved, situational awareness and alertness are key elements in the equation. Get enough sleep to ensure that you are able to respond to situations as they occur.
- 2. Stay dry.** Hypothermia is an emergency that occurs when the body loses heat faster than it can produce it, and an important contributor to this is damp clothing. To avoid heat loss via moisture, use waterproof gear including jackets, gloves, and hats to keep your core dry. Moisture-wicking clothing as a base layer will also serve to keep sweat moving away from the body.
- 3. Include breaks in your schedule.** Take shelter from the cold at frequent intervals. Because the cold weather causes the body to take longer to warm up, it can be difficult to identify in the moment when we need to take a break. Plan ahead and include breaks in your work plan.

Continued on page 3

Inside

President's Perspective	2
Vehicle & Road Safety	4
Youth Safety	5
Workplace Safety	6
Home & Community Safety	7

President’s Perspective: Carbon Monoxide, the Silent Killer

As the colder weather starts to settle in, fuel-burning appliances get used more frequently to help keep folks warm. These types of appliances are handy, of course, but there’s a need to be extremely careful when using them.

Exposure to the serious hazards of carbon monoxide (CO) happens commonly every year, frequently leading to fatalities. Canada-wide, there are more than 300 CO-related deaths every year and more than 200 hospitalizations.

Carbon monoxide is often called the “silent killer” – its victims cannot see it, smell it or taste it. It is an invisible, odorless gas that can poison and, at higher concentrations, even kill you.

Breathing in carbon monoxide can make you feel sick, with symptoms that closely resemble the flu. You may experience headaches, nausea, dizziness and shortness of breath.

While carbon monoxide does not discriminate, some segments of society — including infants, small children, pregnant women, elderly people, and people with heart or lung problems — are more susceptible to its impacts.



Carbon monoxide gas is produced by the incomplete burning of fuels. It can be released by fuel-burning sources including: gas furnaces, hot water heaters, cars, fireplaces, wood stoves and kerosene heaters.

Faulty burners or clogged chimneys are often part of the problem. To avoid the production of CO, have your chimney, furnace and gas-fired appliances checked by professional technicians every year.

A carbon monoxide detector is to protect you and your family from this potentially deadly threat. Install CO alarms where they can be

easily heard, outside each sleeping area and on every level of the home.

When installing a CO alarm, always follow the manufacturer’s instructions. Test CO alarms at least once a month and replace batteries according to manufacturer’s instructions.

To reduce the chances of you or a loved one getting carbon monoxide poisoning, follow these tips:

- **Eliminate CO at the source.** Make the maintenance of your furnace, fireplace, and all fuel-burning appliances an absolute priority. Have them checked and cleaned each year.
- **Install a certified carbon monoxide alarm** in your home and check it regularly to make sure the battery is working.
- **Know the symptoms** of CO poisoning. If they appear, it is important to get everyone, including pets, outside to fresh air immediately.
- Never heat your home with a gas stove.
- Never use a barbeque, charcoal or hibachi grill in the home or in an enclosed area.
- During and after a snowstorm, **make sure vents** for the dryer, furnace, stove and fireplace **are clear of snow.**
- Never use a gas-powered generator inside your home.
- If your CO alarm sounds, make sure to get out of your home immediately and call 911 from a safe place.

As cold winter days become evident in the season and the need to heat our houses becomes a higher priority, please take care with CO and other home safety hazards and have a happy and safe winter season!

Make Safety a Priority!

Gareth Jones
President and CEO



Working Safely in the Cold (Continued from page 1)

4. **Take it slow.** As discussed in point three, the cold weather means the body needs more time to warm up. The cold causes your arteries to contract, and exerting yourself too hard can cause higher blood pressure, lower blood flow, and an increased chance of heart attack. Be smart with how you work and pace yourself. Consider using tools to help you do this subconsciously (e.g., use a smaller shovel so you're pushing less weight around.)
5. **Provide your body with the fuel it needs.** Proper nourishment is a must for your body to stay warm and to retain energy, and dehydration is best staved off by drinking plenty of water, sport drinks or other hydrating beverages. Avoid dehydrating beverages like alcohol or coffee.
6. **If you'll be on the road, keep an emergency Cold Weather Kit on hand.** This should include warm blankets, candles, and matches or another source of combustion. In an emergency, it is important to have the tools to fight off hypothermia until you are able to get assistance. Should you need these, enter the vehicle to cut off the wind and exposure to elements. And, of course, be mindful of the location of the candles. Open flames always need to be treated with extreme caution.

While the temptation to get these tasks done quickly is understandable, it's nevertheless a better idea to work smart and to be able to accomplish the task safely. The Canada Safety Council offers a Cold Stress online education course, [which you can find here](#).

Snowmobile Operators Course

The Snowmobile Operators Course is a 7 to 8 hour training program operated by CSC certified instructors. Interested in learning more about this program? Looking to become an instructor? Check out the link below.

<https://canadasafetycouncil.org/snowmobile>



VEHICLE & ROAD SAFETY

Stay Safe on the Roads This Winter

Winter driving can sometimes be a daunting task, especially when conditions are snowy or icy.

If road conditions are dangerous, consider making alternate travel arrangements or postponing your trip until conditions improve.

Follow these steps to keep yourself safe and collision free during the next few blustery winter months.

1. Make sure that your vehicle is prepared for winter driving.

- Winter tires are a good option, as they will provide greater traction under snowy or icy conditions.
- Keep a snow brush/scrapper in your car, along with possible emergency items such as a lightweight shovel, battery jumper cables, and a flashlight.
- Make sure that mirrors, all windows, and the top of your vehicle, are free of snow or frost before getting onto the road.

2. Drive smoothly and slowly

- Don't make any abrupt turns or stops when driving. Doing so will often cause your vehicle to lose control and skid.
- Driving too quickly is the main cause of winter collisions. Be sure to drive slowly and carefully on snow and ice covered roads.

3. Don't tailgate.

- Tailgating becomes much worse in winter weather. Stopping takes much longer on snowy and icy roads than on dry pavement, so be sure to leave enough room between your vehicle and the one in front of you.

4. Brake before making turns.

- Brake slowly to reduce speed before entering turns. Once you have rounded the corner you can accelerate again.

5. Learn how to control skids.

- When skidding, you actually need to go against your natural instincts and turn into the skid and accelerate. Doing so transfers your vehicle's weight from the front to the rear and often helps vehicles to regain control.

6. Lights On.

- Turn on your lights to increase your visibility to other motorists.

7. No Cruise Control.

- Never use cruise control if conditions are snowy, icy, or wet. If your car hydroplanes, it will try to accelerate and you may lose control of your vehicle.

Most of all, pay attention! Manoeuvres are more difficult to make in the snow. Be sure to anticipate your next move.



YOUTH SAFETY

Winter Activity: Not Tough Sledding!

When the first snow of the season lands, it often brings about a sense of excitement in children — not only because of the beauty and sense of wonder it brings, but also because of the opportunity it brings to engage in winter activities like sledding and tobogganing.

- These can be fun activities when the proper safety measures are taken but, as with any activity that combines speed and the possibility of collision, injuries can and do happen.
- Read on for safety tips to keep in mind as you get ready to take your children sledding.
 - **Winter clothes are a must, so bundle up!** Warm clothing including gloves, snow pants, boots and a warm coat or jacket will ensure that your child can remain warm with limited exposure to the windchill.
 - **Choose their sled carefully.** Choose a sled that can be steered and, ideally, one that has brakes. In the event of someone else sledding in the same general vicinity as your child, a bit of maneuverability could make the difference between a collision and a miss.
 - **Protect their head.** In the event of a collision, managing the risk and the impact is important. Get your child a helmet. A helmet designed for winter sports is ideal, but any helmet is better than none.

- **Pick your location carefully.** You should search for a hill that has a flat, clear area at the bottom to allow the child to glide to a stop. The hill should not be too steep, too crowded, or have hazards in the sledding path. These can include rocks, poles, bumps, signs and trees.
- **Supervision is key.** Keep watch over your children in case of injury. Constant supervision is recommended for children under 12 years of age. We also recommend riding with children under five years of age.
- **Enforce basic ground rules.** Sleds should be ridden in a seated position, facing forward, with feet pointing downhill. Only one person should go down the hill at a time and, with exception to the above recommendation, only one person should ride per sled.
- **Show respect to other sledders.** Share the hill so other sledders can enjoy, too! Walk up the side of the hill, out of the way of the path where others are going downhill. It is also a good idea to keep arms and legs tucked in so there's no risk of accidentally clipping another rider.

Sledding is a classic wintertime activity for good reason, and one which can bring a lot of joy. Keep safety front of mind to ensure that everyone has an enjoyable and safe ride!

Youth Safety Training

Safety training for our youth remains important in building their confidence and life skills. We offer programs including Babysitter, Home Alone, and more!

Contact us at csc@safety-council.org for more information.



Fatigue is a critical occupational safety concern for shift workers, especially workers in the transportation industry. Off the job, being overtired creates a risk for anyone who undertakes an activity that requires concentration and quick response — from driving, to home repair, to skiing. And exhaustion is one of the most common health complaints for Canadian workers.

How sleep affects safety

Losing as little as two hours of sleep can negatively affect alertness and performance. Sleep deprivation affects a person’s carefulness and ability to respond to an emergency. Symptoms can include: decreased judgment, decision-making and memory; slower reaction time; lack of concentration; fixation; and worsened mood.

Studies monitoring brain activity show that one shift worker in five dozes off during the shift. Often, they do not realize afterwards that they have done so. Drowsy drivers, according to sleep researchers, may cause as many crashes as impaired drivers.

Regardless of motivation, professionalism, training or pay, an individual who is very sleepy can lapse into sleep at any time, despite the potential consequences of inattention.

Factors in the work environment

Environments with dim lighting, limited visual acuity (e.g. due to weather), high temperatures, high noise and high comfort tend to enhance fatigue. Also, a worker’s susceptibility to fatigue is increased by tasks where attention must be sustained for long period, and those which are repetitive, paced and/or monotonous.

How to fight fatigue

Lifestyle, operations and physiological disorders are key components in the fight against fatigue.

Workers can reduce fatigue through proper nutrition, stress control and exercise. A healthy diet provides longer-lasting energy — concentrate on complex carbohydrates (starch) rather than simple carbohydrates (sugar); and avoid fatty foods and junk food. And regular exercise is important — cardiovascular, muscle strengthening and flexibility.

Employers can avoid placing workers in jeopardy by analyzing working conditions, addressing operational safety disincentives and conducting sleep-safety training. Shorter shifts and work rotation schedules that go in the direction of the sun (morning, afternoon, night) have been found to reduce the negative effects.

Looking Ahead

The winter months are where the Canada Safety Council plans its activities for the upcoming year. Additionally, we do have three upcoming activities worth highlighting.

In the first quarter of 2023, we’re excited to implement a new training platform for our base of safety training instructors. Through partnership with Bluedrop ISM, this new platform will allow for a simplified registration and credential management process.

On the public safety side of things, we’re excited to launch a report in conjunction with TELUS Insights. This report highlights baseline speed data on six major Canadian highways over the 2019 and 2020 calendar years. The report compares average and 75th percentile speeds pre-COVID vs. those in the midst of the pandemic.

Finally, we are in the final stages of a contribution agreement to develop a safety training program for drivers-for-hire. Stay tuned for more information!

HOME & COMMUNITY SAFETY

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT RADON

(NC) Radon gas can pose a serious health risk, and it can be found almost anywhere – including your home. To keep yourself and your loved ones safe, here are four things every homeowner should know about it.

- 1. It can seep into your home.** Radon is a naturally occurring, odourless gas that is found in the soil surrounding your home. It can enter your home through cracks in the foundation or hollow spaces like support posts, and it can become trapped in enclosed spaces like a basement or crawlspace.
- 2. Radon is everywhere – but too much in your home can be a health risk.** Concentration levels can vary from region to region, from home to home, between different areas of a home and depending on the time of year. According to Health Canada, if your home exceeds the safe limit or 200 becquerels

per cubic metre, you should take action to reduce it.

- 3. It's easy to test your home for unsafe radon levels.** You can hire a certified professional to test your home for radon, or you can purchase a test kit on your own. If you go the do-it-yourself route, make sure the test is certified through the Canadian National Radon Proficiency Program.
- 4. New home warranties include radon remediation coverage.** If you live in Ontario and your home is less than seven years old, your new home warranty covers radon remediation. You can work with your builder to make a warranty claim or contact Tarion, the not-for-profit organization that backs the builder's warranty.

Find more information at tarion.com.



Follow us on LinkedIn:
[linkedin.com/company/canada-safety-council/](https://www.linkedin.com/company/canada-safety-council/)



Follow us on Instagram:
[@canadasafetycouncil](https://www.instagram.com/canadasafetycouncil)



Like us on Facebook:
www.facebook.com/Canada.Safety



Follow us on Twitter:
[@CanadaSafetyCSC](https://twitter.com/CanadaSafetyCSC)

Safety Canada is the member newsletter of the Canada Safety Council, an independent, national, not-for-profit safety organization. While strenuous efforts are made to ensure the content represents the best current research and opinions, no guarantee, warranty or representation is made by CSC as to the absolute correctness or sufficiency of all information, and CSC assumes no responsibility therewith. Articles may be printed with credit, except those copyrighted to other organizations.

ISSN: 0048-8968

Canada Safety Council

1020 Thomas Spratt Place, Ottawa, ON K1G 5L5

Tel.: 613-739-1535 Fax: 613-739-1566

President: Gareth Jones

Editor: Lewis Smith (ext. 228)

Website: www.canadasafetycouncil.org

Charitable BN: 11882 8565 RR 0001