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“Winter Safety Tips”

Although the winter season doesn't officially begin until December 21st, now is the perfect time to start preparing for colder temperatures and thinking about winter safety. Winter weather can be unpredictable, and conditions such as frostbite and hypothermia can develop very quickly, especially when wind and moisture are involved.

If you haven't already done so, begin transitioning your wardrobe by pulling out warmer clothing and planning to dress in layers when spending time outdoors. Morning temperatures may start off chilly and gradually warm through the afternoon, so layering is an excellent way to stay comfortable and protected throughout the day. When choosing a base layer, select a fabric that fits close to the skin and helps wick moisture away. Materials like wool are a great choice because they naturally wick away moisture from the body, helping you stay dry and warm. Your mid-layer is equally important, as its job is to trap air close to your body. This trapped air acts as insulation, helping maintain your core temperature. Finally, your outer layer should be designed to block wind, repel moisture, and keep warmth in. Dense fabrics such as nylon or denim work well, while cotton or linen should be avoided because they absorb moisture and can make you feel colder. Wearing a stocking cap helps prevent heat loss from the head, which contributes to keeping your overall body temperature stable. Mittens are a better option than gloves when aiming to stay warm, as they allow your fingers to share heat by staying close together.

Winter is also an ideal time to check your vehicle and prepare for emergencies. If you don't already have a winter emergency kit in your car, consider assembling one. Useful items include a snow brush and ice scraper, jumper cables or a portable jump starter, blankets, extra warm clothes, a phone charger, non-perishable snacks, bottled water, a flashlight, sand in a small container to help with traction, and chains or other items that can help pull a vehicle out of a ditch. Keeping your gas tank at least half full is also a smart practice during cold weather. Whenever possible, avoid traveling during poor weather conditions.

When shoveling snow this winter, be aware of your physical limitations. One of the leading causes of winter heart attacks is shoveling snow, especially when it is heavy and wet. If you can try to remove snow in a way that doesn't require picking it up and throwing it. If you use a snowblower, make sure that it is serviced before your first use.

Information comes from Kansas State University Publications.