

It's Winter Weather Hazard Awareness Week

Walker

It is the time of year that many dread, and some look forward to. However you feel about it, our seasons are quickly changing as we move into winter.

Our first winter rain and snow events always create driving conditions we have not seen for a few months and sometimes cause us to remember how to quickly brush up on winter driving skills.

The Cass County Sheriff's Office and Homeland Security and Emergency Management—a division of the Minnesota Department of Public Safety—feature Winter Weather Hazard Awareness Week.

The week features an intense news and social media information campaign that highlights daily topics related to winter weather safety. The HSEM Winter Weather Safety website offers additional information, checklists and resources to assist in local



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education efforts throughout the season.

We encourage people, families, businesses and organizations to use the information to review, refresh and share their winter safety knowledge and habits. Although HSEM dedicates a specific day for each topic, these are items that can be discussed and reviewed at any time during the season.

Monday, Nov. 13: Winter Weather Overview

— ice storms, blizzards, subzero temperatures, winter weather watches, warnings and windchill.

You should listen to a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration weather radio, commercial radio and television for the latest winter

storm warnings, watches and advisories.

The National Weather Service issues outlooks, watches, warnings and advisories for all winter weather hazards. It is important to know and understand the differences between them and how they may affect you and your travel.

• **Outlook:** Winter storm conditions are possible in the next two to five days. Stay tuned to local media for updates.

• **Watch:** Winter storm conditions are possible within the next 36-48 hours. Prepare now!

• **Warning:** Life-threatening severe winter conditions have begun or will begin within 24 hours. Act now.

• **Advisory:** Winter weather conditions are expected. Exercise caution.

• **Tuesday, Nov. 14: Outdoor Winter Safety** — safety on ice, snowmobile safety, hypothermia and frostbite.

• **Wednesday, Nov. 15:**

In addition, people can

Winter Fire Safety — winter and holiday fire safety, alternative heat sources, smoke detectors, cooking safety, candles and decorations.

In the winter months, our heating, lighting, cooking and holiday activities increase dramatically — and with them, the risk of residential fires.

Service heating sources annually and have them inspected. Keep intakes and exhaust clear of snow and ice for maximum ventilation and clearance.

• **Thursday, Nov. 16: Indoor Winter Safety** — carbon monoxide, radon, mold and general home care.

Carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning can happen at any time of the year, but the danger is greater during the winter when doors and windows stay closed and fireplaces, gas heaters or other fuel-burning appliances are in use.

Tell someone where you are going, the routes you plan to travel and when you expect to return. Report your safe arrival at the destination.

Stay on designated roads. Avoid shortcuts off main highways, as they may not be plowed or patrolled. Before leaving town, fill your gas tank. While traveling, stop frequently to refill your tank.

Assemble an emergency kit and keep it in the

vehicle throughout the season. Keep essential items in the car using ideas from checklists provided online.

Although some of the information provided may seem basic, we know the importance and significance of sharing this information yearly to help keep you safe during winter months, which we all know can be harsh and dangerous to travel in.

If you have specific questions that you would like answered in this column or in person, please feel free to contact me anytime using one of the following methods: email bryan.welk@casscountymn.gov; call 218-547-1424 or 1-800-450-2677; mail to or visit the Cass County Sheriff's Office, 303 Minnesota Ave. W or P.O. Box 1119, Walker, MN 56484.

Bryan Welk is the Cass County sheriff.

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