

Scituate Police Department Community Services Topic: Winter Safety

December is the month that we discuss winter safety in our classes. Snow and ice related topics are of prime consideration now as the temperature falls and the snows come. We will be covering items such as sledding, skating, winter pedestrian safety, snow tunnels, snowballs and more. Join us to help make it a safer winter season.

Dress Properly for the Weather

The first thing we need to think about in the cold-weather months is being dressed properly. To stay warm consider the following points:

- Dress in layers (Thermal underwear that takes moisture away from you skin is helpful, and wool stays warm even when wet)
- Keep a warm hat on you head to reduce heat loss
- Protect your hands (mittens keep hands warmest, but gloves will help to protect you, also)
- Warm socks and waterproof footwear help to keep your feet warm and dry
- Frostbite can occur quickly. Limit you time out in cold, windy conditions, and try to cover any exposed skin.

Sledding Tips

Check out the hill before you go sledding. Look for hazards with a trusted adult to be sure that the area is appropriate for sledding. Avoid sledding in the direction of:

- Rocks, trees, fences or other obstructions
- Roads, driveways or parking lots
- Buildings
- Lakes, ponds, rivers or streams

If the hill looks safe, remember the following:

- Don't sled toward other people.
- Don't try to knock others off of their sleds.
- Respect others that are sledding.
- Don't try to show off by standing on your sled or going over big jumps. These behaviors often end in injuries.
- Once you have reached the bottom of the hill, move to the side to allow others down.
- Walk back up using the side of the hill. Don't walk up where people are coming down.
- Don't bring pets with you that might get injured or injure someone else.

Remember these tips for a safe and enjoyable sledding outing.

Skating and Ice Safety

When the temperature is down and the ice has formed on the ponds, many people look to the closet for their ice skates. Knowing when a pond is frozen solid enough to hold a person's weight is not an exact science. The Scituate Police Department recognizes the fact that although ice may support a person's weight in one area, another area might be dangerously thin. For that reason, we recommend that you skate at a skating rink where the ice is safe. Backyard rinks containing only inches of water seem to be a reasonable alternative as well. If, despite the warnings, you decide to skate on a pond, keep in mind some ideas that may help to lessen the danger.

- Choose a pond that is shallow
- Don't choose a remote area to skate (if people can't see you, they can't help you)
- Never skate alone
- Have an adult check the ice first
- Stay away from areas of moving water where the ice may be thinner
- Bring a rope and blankets with you in case someone falls through
- If you have a cell phone, bring it to call for help, if necessary.

No matter where you skate, wearing a helmet, knee and elbow pads can prevent some painful, and possibly life changing injuries. This can be extremely important for those skaters who are still in the learning stages. Be responsible and watch out for others, especially younger children.

Snowballs

Snowball fights are one of the common occurrences of winter. Even so, it is important to consider some points concerning the throwing of snowballs.

- Snowballs are not allowed at school at all.
- Snowballs can contain ice, sand, twigs, glass, dirt, and other debris that may be found on the ground. The snow alone can cause injury, depending on where it strikes a person. These other items could add to the severity of the injury.
- Snowballs thrown at vehicles can cause crashes that injure people or damage the vehicle.
- People are not always accurate in throwing snowballs (or anything else, for that matter). What you intend to hit and what you do hit may be entirely different.

Snow Tunnels

Many children have a fascination with hiding places. The winter brings a dangerous twist to this, in that children sometimes dig tunnels into snowbanks to create hiding spots. The danger of a tunnel collapsing, and trapping children under the snow where they could suffocate is very real. Any time that a child is under the snow, he or she is in danger. The length of time that a child (or anyone else) can survive without air is short. Add to that the problem of not being able to easily locate someone buried in the snow, and it is easy to see why snow tunnels are so dangerous.

Pedestrian Considerations in Snow-

Pedestrian safety is a consideration during the snow and ice season. Vehicles have a harder time stopping on slippery surfaces and snow piles can block a driver's view of a pedestrian. Remember the following when walking during the winter:

- If a sidewalk is cleared and available, use it.
- If not, walk on the left edge of the road, NOT on top of snowbanks where you may fall into the road.
- If you are coming out from behind a snowbank, stop first and check to see if it is safe. Drivers may have a more difficult time seeing you because of the snowbank or other factors, such as glare off of the snow.
- Don't take any chances with moving vehicles. Vehicles will have a harder time stopping during winter months, and your chances of slipping and falling on slippery surfaces are greater as well.

Other General Safety Tips-

- Watch for icicles hanging from buildings. They can fall and cause injuries.
- Be careful on outside stairs that maybe slippery from ice or snow.
- Stay away from roads when plows are trying to clear the snow, and from sanders as they treat the road surface.