

Senior Safety Tips for Winter

The Car

- has the car been serviced and is it fully road worthy ?
- is the tire pressure correct ?
- have the windshield wipers been checked and cleaned ?
- has the washer fluid been topped up and is there deicer in there ?
- the heater/defroster ?
- is the radiator working properly ?
- check the belts
- what about the lights and indicators ?
- is the car battery in good condition, or is it time to get a new one for the winter ahead ?
- does your parent use chains or winter tires ?
- if your parent goes on a winter trip keep the tank topped up

- ❑ this may seem a little harsh, but is your parent road worthy ? It's important for your parent to be honest about their driving skills, as they may hurt themselves and other people if they cause an accident
- ❑ does your parent have glasses to cut down glare in snowy winter conditions ?
- ❑ do your parents have problems with night vision and driving ?
- ❑ lastly, does your parent have a breakdown kit ?

A breakdown kit

What goes into a winter car breakdown kit ?

- ❑ ice scraper and brush
- ❑ flashlight
- ❑ batteries
- ❑ jumper cables
- ❑ cell phone charger
- ❑ blanket
- ❑ water
- ❑ gloves

- boots
- flares
- first aid kit
- tire chains
- non-perishable snacks

The heating system

- does your parent have a boiler that needs checking ?
- is their electric heating working ?
- is the electric wiring in the system up to date ?
- if your parent uses chimneys and fire places have they been cleaned so they don't catch fire when the season starts ?
- does your parent have the appropriate smoke alarms, fire alarms and carbon monoxide alarms ?
- does your parent have a working fire extinguisher or at least a fire blanket ?

Windows and doors

- are all the windows properly sealed to exclude drafts of cold air ?
- if your parent has single glazed windows have they had shrink plastic put up to double glaze them ?
- have you got draft excluders for all the doors ?
- have you checked that all the windows and doors are opening easily and don't need oiling ?
- make sure all the bulbs in the outdoor areas and the garage are working

Supplies for the winter

- is there lots of grit and salt for any paths , the driveway and any porches to stop your loved ones from slipping ?
- if the outside areas have any badly paved areas on which you can catch your feet, maybe get those done before winter ?

- ❑ are there any gutters which are leaking water down to the ground which could freeze over ?
- ❑ it's a good idea to get the gutters cleaned out before winter
- ❑ if your parents are starting to get a little fragile, is it time to get railings put up along the walking areas around the house so they have something to hold onto as they walk in snow and ice ?
- ❑ has someone been contacted to come and do snow shoveling and gritting around the home in the winter if your or your elderly parents are unable to do that ?

Power outage kit and supplies

- ❑ flashlights and fresh batteries
- ❑ battery-powered radios or televisions
- ❑ candles, matches, or lighters (you will need to decide if your parents are safe to use these without causing a fire – it's your call)
- ❑ rechargeable LED camping lantern – we have the Blazin Fireball and it really is incredibly bright and can be charged off a computer
- ❑ water for drinking and cooking

- ❑ portable heater (oil or gas)- again this item depends on how safe you think it is for your elderly parents to operate it, and again that's your call
- ❑ camping equipment (sleeping bags, camp stoves, lanterns)
- ❑ non-perishable food and a manual can opener
- ❑ manufacturers' instructions for power-operated equipment such as the garage door, generator
- ❑ important medicines you need to take. Better to locate them while the power is still on than fumbling around in the dark should the power go out

Going outside in the cold

- ❑ do your parents have the right shoes ?
- ❑ should your parent be going out when it's really cold ?
- ❑ is your parent wearing lots of layers when they go out ?
- ❑ has your parent got any thermal waterproof trousers – very cheap on ebay, and they are absolutely fantastic at keeping you warm. I got a pair for 15\$ on ebay from China – 6 weeks shipping.

- ❑ does your parent have good quality winter clothing for going outdoors – coat, hat, scarf and gloves ?
- ❑ keep mouths covered with some type of scarf to warm the air before it goes into the lungs
- ❑ do you need a GPS tracker watch with fall alert and a call facility for your parents in winter if they want to go out ?
- ❑ does your loved one need a mobility device like a rollator in the snow to help with their balance ?
- ❑ if your parent uses crutches do they have winter tips on them ?

Outside Areas of the house

- ❑ keep snow and ice cleared from paths, porches, entrances and the garage
- ❑ salt and grit all the areas where you can slip
- ❑ wear the right shoes with grip
- ❑ put down mats and shoe scrapers so you don't drag snow into the house
- ❑ make sure all the lighting is nice and bright in the outside areas

- ❑ make sure your parent has a walker or rollator for outings if they are having mobility issues

Staying warm indoors

- ❑ don't sit in drafts
- ❑ are your parents wearing thermal under garments ?
- ❑ has your parent tried wearing silk under garments which are really warm
- ❑ the recommended temp for seniors indoors is 71 F
- ❑ do your parents' have a hot water bottle which they can sit with – they stay warm for hours
- ❑ heating blankets are also very efficient, but use electricity so they cost more than a hot water bottle
- ❑ does your parent have adequate sweaters
- ❑ does your parent have light gloves for indoors
- ❑ does your parent use a hot water bottle in bed or a heating blanket ?
- ❑ does your parent have a thin cap to keep head warm – 80% of heat loss is from the head

- ❑ do exercises to increase circulation – either sitting in the chair just moving ankles in circular motions and arms as well
- ❑ if your parents are mobile have them get up and move around regularly and shake their arms to get the blood flowing
- ❑ you can also get little wheel with pedals which you can use sitting in a chair, both of your legs and for your arms if you put it on a table in front of you
- ❑ drink plenty of hot drinks
- ❑ eat warm meals
- ❑ get a microwave to easily heat food up when your loved one is cold
- ❑ if your parent has a favorite seat, set up a kettle or thermos there for them with all they need to have multiple drinks – but keep the electric cable where they can't cause tripping

Winter Diet

- ❑ have food with fish oils – omega 3 – tuna fish, sardines and other oily fish for stiff joints
- ❑ foods with vitamin D – tuna, mackerel, salmon,

- ❑ foods fortified with vitamin D – milk, cheeses, egg yolks, cereals

To fight off depression in winter months

- ❑ lots of bright lights
- ❑ if your loved one suffers from SAD (Seasonal affective Disorder) do they have the lights for the disorder ?
- ❑ if your parent is isolated in winter and doesn't go out, are people calling and visiting them ?
- ❑ get Skype or Facetime so you can video call with your loved ones to help with loneliness
- ❑ make sure that your parents can get out and see their friends – if they need help, see if you or other friends and family can take them out to appointments

I hope that this helps and stay safe.

Gareth Williams

Lookingaftermomanddad.com