

# *TerranearPMC Safety Share*

## **Week of October 29, 2012 – 100 Days of Winter is Coming!**

Los Alamos National Laboratory is getting ready to kick off its latest Safety Campaign: **100 Days of Winter**. It is anticipated to start on Monday, November, 26 (right after the Thanksgiving Weekend) and extends into the first week of March; March 5<sup>th</sup> to be exact.

**100 Days of Winter** is designed to increase our awareness of the hazards associated with this time of the year. As the saying goes, "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure;" so before we hit the winter season, this is a great time to get ourselves thinking about what we can do to be proactive and prepare for the cold temperatures and hazardous conditions associated with the winter months. While there are many areas that we need to think about when it comes to winter safety, this week the focus will be cold temperatures and driving.

Although periods of extreme cold cannot always be predicted far in advance, weather forecasts can sometimes provide you with several days' notice. Listen to weather forecasts regularly, and check your emergency supplies whenever a period of extreme cold is predicted.

Yes, cold temperatures can be devastating; but aside from the actual physical freezing to our bodies, cold temperatures can cause adverse effects to us in indirect ways. For instance, improperly vented fireplaces; they are typically used during the winter months, but if we do not properly maintain them, we could be setting ourselves up for disaster. If you plan to use a fireplace or wood stove for emergency heating, have your chimney or flue inspected each year. Ask your local fire department to recommend an inspector, or find one in the yellow pages or online (Google and Yahoo search engines can locate just about anything these days). Also, if you'll be using a fireplace, wood stove, or kerosene heater, install a smoke detector and a battery-operated carbon monoxide detector near the area to be heated. Test them monthly, and replace batteries twice a year.

Your ability to feel a change in temperature decreases with age, and older people are more susceptible to health problems caused by cold. If you are over 65 years old (or know someone in this age category), it is very important to be aware when freezing conditions exist. Circulation in the extremities (hands, head and feet) may not be as effective as during one's younger years, leaving people in this age group more susceptible to frostbite as well as exacerbating other pre-existing health conditions.

Insulate any water lines that run along exterior walls so your water supply will be less likely to freeze. Freezing pipes have a tendency to burst due to the extreme pressures caused by outside cold and water inside the pipes expanding (yep; water is its most dense at 4° C. Therefore, at freezing temperatures, expansion occurs). To the extent possible, weatherproof your home by adding weather-stripping, insulation, insulated doors and storm windows, or thermal-pane windows.

If you have pets, bring them indoors. If you cannot bring them inside, provide adequate shelter to keep them warm and make sure that they have access to unfrozen water. Here are some simple items/steps to help with your winter planning.

- Insulate walls and attic.
- Caulk and weather-strip doors and windows.
- Install storm windows or cover windows with plastic from the inside.
- Insulate any water lines that run along outer walls (water will be less likely to freeze).
- Service snow-removal equipment.
- Have chimney and flue inspected.
- Install easy-to-read outdoor thermometer.

**Prepare your car!** You can avoid many dangerous winter travel problems by planning ahead. Have maintenance service on your vehicle as often as the manufacturer recommends. In addition, every fall:

- Have the radiator system serviced, or check the antifreeze level yourself with an antifreeze tester. Add antifreeze, as needed.
- Replace windshield-wiper fluid with a wintertime mixture.
- Replace any worn tires, and check the air pressure in the tires.

During winter, keep the gas tank near full to help avoid ice in the tank and fuel lines. Be sure to check the following:

Antifreeze	Windshield wiper fluid (wintertime mixture)
Heater	Brakes
Ignition	Emergency flashers
Exhaust	Tires (air pressure and wear)
Fuel	Oil
Brake fluid	Defroster
Battery	Radiator

Also, make sure you have a scraper to keep your windows clear. These items should have a brush on one end and a scraper on the other. Clean off the top of your car too! Accumulated snow left on the car's roof has a tendency to slide forward during sudden stops and cover your windshield- this typically happens at untimely moments, such as at city intersections, thus your ability to see is severely compromised. Also the roads are icy. This means you should be very cautious and drive slower as well as watching other drivers who may start to slip and lose control.

Remember that during the daylight hours, snow and ice may melt, but during the evening hours, the temperatures will drop again, causing freezing conditions and slippery surfaces for your walk to work (or car) in the morning. The next installment of **100 Days of Winter** will address slippery surfaces.

This is the time for us to begin thinking about the upcoming months and to prepare for the many hazards that winter brings. Of course there is a lot of fun and joy associated with this time of year too. So let's be aware of what we can do now so we can enjoy this season with all its joy and the promise of a new year. Our Safety is in our hands!

**In the depth of winter, I finally learned that within me there lay an invincible summer.**

Albert Camus