



Winter safety tips for older adults

Winters can be harsh. They provide a special risk for people who are frail, have chronic conditions, have mobility or eyesight issues, occasionally lack good balance, or simply live alone. It is especially important for seniors and caregivers to take extra precaution to prevent hypothermia, falls and accidents. Here are some important tips to keep yourself safe.

- Use timers on interior and exterior lights at home to make sure you never enter the house in darkness. It gets darker earlier in the winter so it's better to be proactive to prevent falls.
- Make sure you have tips installed on canes to prevent slipping on the ice. It is important for balance to make sure that canes are sturdy and dependable.



- Get a flu shot. If you have not already, make sure to get a flu shot as soon as possible.
- Continue your fitness routine in the winter. It is critical to your physical and mental well-being to remain active. Join a walking club at the mall or sign up for fitness classes at a local community center, senior center or gym.

- Wear good non-skid footwear throughout the winter to prevent falls.
- Stay hydrated. You may not feel like drinking ice-cold liquids but it is important to continue drinking your minimum daily requirement of water to stay healthy.
- Have ice melt handy at the front door so you can easily scoop it on the front and back walkways.
- Dress in layers to stay warm and always cover all extremities when you go outside to prevent hypothermia.
- Never use a stove for heat and take extra caution when using space heaters.



- If you use an electric space heater, make sure that it is placed away from drapes, papers, clothing and anything else that may be flammable. Some space heaters today come with auto-shut off devices in case they are left on too long or tip over. Space heaters cause fires!
- Have extra food, medicine, candles and supplies on hand throughout the winter.

If you have any questions about how to keep a loved one safe, no matter their age, please contact the Aging & Disability Resource Center at (253) 798-4600 or (800) 562-0332.

(Source: Geriatrics)

And the Weatherman Says . . .

The National Weather Service categorizes winter storms in many ways. Stay tuned to your local weather station to evaluate whether or not temperatures and weather pose a danger to you. Get familiar with these general terms from the National Weather Service:

1. **A winter advisory** means weather is expected to cause significant inconveniences and may be hazardous. Plan ahead and fill your car's gas tank to help prevent an ice-clogged line.
2. **A frost/freeze warning** means to expect below freezing temperatures that may damage unprotected plants. If you must go out to cover the plants or pipes, wear a hat and cover your mouth in addition to your normal winter gear.
3. **A winter storm watch** means heavy ice and snow are expected in one to two days.
4. **A winter storm warning** means severe weather is about to begin and you should stay indoors.
5. **A blizzard warning** means that outdoor conditions could well be life threatening. Time to hunker down and enjoy a good book! Winter winds can always become dangerous.

Pay attention to the weather reports. It is better to take precautions and not have a storm than to ignore the warning and suffer the consequences.



Taking the Bus in Winter Weather

Be aware that service on all bus routes may be running much slower than usual during bad weather. Some routes on steep hills can be affected by severe weather causing detours for passenger and vehicle safety. As a caution, dress warmly because your bus may be late.

A list of routes most likely to have detours during bad weather is at the Pierce Transit website: www.piercetransit.org/snow/snow.htm. Check it out before the snow falls!

Calling Pierce Transit for information during a storm can be frustrating. The phone lines are often overwhelmed. Plan ahead!

You can call the PT hotline at (253) 984-8155 for the latest information or talk to an operator at (253) 581-8000. SHUTTLE riders should call (253) 581-8100 for the latest route and service information.

Every attempt will be made to continue wheelchair-accessible service. However, in the past sand and salt has interfered with the lift mechanism. Call (253) 581-8000 before heading to your bus stop.

One Bus Away is a new service that provides real time bus information that you can access from your computer, cell phone or other mobile device. Learn more at <http://onebusaway.org/>.

If you have any difficulties or need information on taking a Pierce Transit bus, call the Pierce County Aging and Disability Resource Center at (253) 798-4600 or (800) 562-0332.

Contact your Legislator

Whether it's a Special Session or a Regular Session of the Washington State Legislature, it's important for constituents to be in contact with their legislators. Legislators want to hear from the people who voted them into office.

One of the easiest ways to send a message to legislators is the Legislative Hotline. All you have to do is dial **(800) 562-6000**. An operator will take your message and relay it to the Governor and/or your state senator and representatives. Operators will help you determine who your senator and representatives are if you are not sure. This is one of the most convenient and easy ways to advocate in Olympia.

Another way to contact your legislator is by e-mail. Legislators like e-mail more than regular mail. It's faster and easier for them and the voter. Here are some hints:

- Only address one issue.
- Keep it brief – 3-4 sentences.
- Include your full name and address.

There is a listing of all the Pierce County legislators at www.PierceCountyWA.org/ALTC.

Plan now for these special events:

Dec 9 – Depression Around the Holidays

Depression affects memory, concentration and can decrease your overall vitality, decreasing wellness significantly. What are your risk factors? Lost a life-time spouse/partner? Have a spouse or partner who is chronically or seriously ill? Lost interest in things that used to bring you joy? Feelings of helplessness or hopelessness? Is it growing harder and harder to get through each day? Suffer uncontrolled chronic diseases? Free. Held 10:30 a.m. -11:30 a.m. at Cascade Park Vista, 242 St. Helens Ave. in Tacoma. Contact Sandy May at (253) 627-3833.

Feb. 23 – 2012 Senior Lobby Day

Held at the United Churches in downtown Olympia from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. Open to all. Details will be posted at www.waseniorlobby.org/.

March 13 – Pierce County Cancer Survivor Conference

This free event is open to all people affected by cancer as patients, family members and caregivers. Sponsored by the American Cancer Society and numerous community partners. Held at the Wheelock Student Center at the University of Puget Sound. Event details and registration is open at <http://pccancersurvivorship.org>.

June 4 – Challenges in Caregiving: Giving Care, Taking Care

Keynote speaker for 2012 is Wendy Lustbader, MSW. The annual caregiver conference held at the Tukwila Community Center from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Details and registration available in Spring. Special scholarships are offered to Pierce County residents participating in the Family Caregiver Support Program.

We've Changed Our Name . . .

Our new name is **Pierce County Aging & Disability Resources**. The new name better reflects our services to both older adults and people of all ages with disabilities. We are here to help.

Contact us by calling the **Aging & Disability Resource Center at (253) 798-4600 or (800) 562-0332**. We are there for you Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Have a question? Have a need? Please give us a call.