

# North Dakota State University

## Severe Winter Weather Awareness

### I. Introduction

When the first snow of the season is forecasted it is a good time to re-familiarize ourselves with the realities that winter brings to our area. The intent is to establish awareness and best practices, as well as to promote and provide for a safer environment for students, faculty and staff.

### II. Purpose

To provide guidelines for faculty, staff and students to know and understand the best practices when involved in severe winter weather.

### III. Goals

The goal is to reduce the risk of injury by maximizing personal safety during severe winter weather.

### IV. Procedures

#### A. Guidelines to follow during severe winter weather

1. Dress in layers of loose fitting clothing when out in the cold. Wear a hat, gloves, mittens, scarf and appropriate shoes/footwear for the conditions.
2. Walk carefully on snowy, icy sidewalks and stay on cleared pathways. Take small steps and slow down for the conditions.
3. When shoveling snow, go slow, take breaks, avoid overexertion and avoid twisting. Remember to:
  - a. Avoid caffeine or nicotine before beginning. These are stimulants, which may increase your heart rate and cause blood vessels to constrict. This places extra stress on the heart.
  - b. Drink plenty of water. Dehydration is just as big an issue in cold months as it is in the summer.
  - c. Stretch the muscles in your arms, legs and back before shoveling. Warm muscles will work more efficiently and be less likely to be injured.
  - d. Protect your back from injury by lifting correctly. Stand with your feet about hip width apart with one foot forward for balance and keep the shovel close to the body. Bend from the knees (not the back) and tighten your stomach muscles as you lift the snow.
  - e. Keep fire hydrants and gas meters near your home or business visible and free of snow.
4. Carry a winter survival kit in your vehicle when traveling. Include extra clothing, a blanket, high energy foods, flashlight with extra batteries, paper towels, sand and a shovel.
5. Keep the gas tank full and let someone know your destination, route you plan to take and when you expect to arrive. Check the latest forecast and road reports and have a cell phone in case of an emergency.

6. If you are stranded in your vehicle, stay with your car. Do not try to walk to safety. Raise the vehicle antenna and tie a bright colored cloth to it for rescuers to see. Keep the exhaust pipe clear of snow and start your car to use the heater for about ten minutes every hour. Keep a window open about a half an inch to let air in. Move your arms and legs to keep blood circulating and stay awake.
7. Please check the following sites for more information and tips:
  - a. [NDSU Storm Procedures](#)
  - b. [North Dakota Travel Information Map](#)
  - c. [Minnesota Road Traveler Information](#)
  - d. [National Weather Service](#)
  - e. [American Red Cross](#)