

Alexander County staff offer tips for winter weather safety

With the winter weather comes hazards that could our health and safety at risk.

Outdoor Safety

Many injuries associated with cold weather result from slips and falls outdoors. To enjoy the outdoors and stay safe:

- Avoid ice. Keep walkways and steps free from as much ice as possible by using a professional chemical de-icing compound, rock salt, or sand.
- Do not leave areas of skin exposed to the cold.
- Avoid exertion as it can lead to perspiring and becoming overtired. Remember to hydrate often when spending time in cold weather.
- Do not use alcohol or drugs and avoid caffeinated beverages.
- Avoid getting wet as this can lead to hypothermia.
- Watch carefully for signs of health problems related to cold-weather.

Cold weather safety

Cold temperatures can cause the body to lose heat faster than it is produced, which can lead to serious health problems such as frostbite and hypothermia. Signs of frostbite include loss of feeling in extremities and white or pale appearance. Hypothermia may show signs of uncontrollable

shivering, disorientation, memory loss, incoherence, slurred speech, exhaustion, and drowsiness.

Populations at highest risk of these health problems include people 65 and older, infants, children, people who spend time outdoors for long periods of time, and people who drink alcohol in excess or use illicit drugs. To protect against these health problems:

- Wear layers of lightweight, loose-fitting, warm, dry clothing, and remember to include a hat, scarf, and mittens.
- Make sure body parts most often affected by frostbite are covered (nose, ears, toes, cheeks, chin, fingers)
- Cover your mouth to help protect your lungs from the extreme cold.
- Limit time outside during cold temperatures and seek shelter in a warm, dry place
- Check on others who might be at risk for cold weather-related illness
- Seek care if hypothermia or frostbite is suspected.

Carbon monoxide safety

In 2017, 227 people required emergency department care for unintentional, non-fire related carbon monoxide poisoning in North Carolina. Carbon mon-

oxide (CO) is an odorless, colorless gas which can cause sudden illness and death. The most common symptoms of CO poisoning are: dizziness, upset stomach, headache, weakness, vomiting, confusion, and chest pain. To prevent carbon monoxide poisoning:

- If your heat goes out, close off rooms that you do not need to use, dress in lightweight layers of clothing, and make sure to wear a hat to preserve heat indoors.
- Never use a gas-powered generator or other fuel-burning appliances indoors or in the garage
- Never use charcoal grills or propane stoves indoors, even in a fireplace
- Never use a gas oven to heat a home, even for a short amount of time
- Install a carbon monoxide alarm with an Underwriters Laboratory UL™ listing on each level of a home and near all sleeping areas. Carefully follow the directions to ensure proper alarm placement and check the batteries regularly.
- Replace alarms more than seven years old or when end-of-service indicator chirps
- Evacuate and call 9-1-1 if a carbon monoxide alarm sounds

Travel Safety

Travelling in winter weather can be extremely hazardous. Avoid going out, and follow the guidance of authorities. If you must travel, be cautious and:

- Listen for reports on the radio or television regarding travel advisories issued by the National Weather Service.
- Do not travel if conditions make it hard to see.
- Avoid traveling on ice-covered roads, and overpasses or bridges if at all possible.
- Use tire chains and make sure to have a mobile phone with you at all times.
- If you have ice or snow on your windshield, never pour water on it as a removal tool. Your windshield could shatter.
- Always carry additional warm clothing in case the car breaks down.

If you become stranded while traveling, stay in your vehicle. It is often the safest choice if visibility is low or roads are covered in ice. To stay safe while stranded, you should:

- Use a brightly-colored cloth to tie around the antenna of your car (if you have one) and raise the hood of your car (if it is not snowing).
- Move anything that you need that is stored in your trunk to the passenger area of your car.
- Use extra clothing, blankets, or newspapers to wrap your entire body (including your head).
- Stay awake, as sleeping can make you more vulnerable to cold-related health problems.
- Run the motor and heater for about 10 minutes every hour, make sure to open one window slightly to let fresh air in. Check to make sure that snow is not blocking the exhaust pipe of the car. Doing so will reduce the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning.
- As you sit in your vehicle, move your arms and legs frequently to improve circulation and help you to stay warmer.
- Avoid eating unmelted snow as this can lower your body temperature.
- If there is more than one person in the car, huddle together for warmth.

Food safety without power

When power is lost, all refrigerated and frozen food should be evaluated before being

used or refrozen. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration offers the following food safety information for anticipated power outages:

- Frozen, partially thawed food is safe to cook or refreeze if it still contains ice crystals or has not risen above 41 degrees Fahrenheit. Keep refrigerated foods at or below 41 degrees Fahrenheit and frozen food at or below 32 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible to maintain the cold temperature. A refrigerator will keep food cold for about four hours if it is unopened. A full freezer will keep the temperature for approximately 48 hours (24 hours if it is half full) and the door remains closed.

Flu season

So far this flu season, there have been five flu-related deaths reported to the Division of Public Health. Flu can be a serious illness, especially for adults older than 65, children younger than age 5, pregnant women,

and those with certain medical conditions like asthma, diabetes, or heart disease. Flu usually comes on suddenly, and people who are sick with flu often feel some or all of these symptoms:

- Fever or feeling feverish/chills (not everyone experiences a fever)
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle or body aches
- Headaches
- Fatigue (tiredness)
- Some people may have vomiting and diarrhea, though this is more common in children than adults.

The Department of Health and Human Services encourages vaccinations for everyone ages 6 months and older, and the following precautions to protect against the spread of flu and other viruses during the winter months:

- Stay home when sick until fever-free for at least 24 hours.
- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue and then discard the tissue promptly.
- Wash hands frequent-

ly, preferably with soap and water.

For more information on how to prepare for winter-related events, download the free ReadyNC app, or visit www.readync.org for real-time traffic and weather conditions, open shelters and items needed in emergency supply kits. For additional information, visit: <https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/winter/duringstorm/outdoorsafety.html>.

Brushy Mountain Film Users Group will meet Dec. 20

The next meeting of the Brushy Mountain Film Users Group, comprised of photographers of all abilities who still use film or are interested in using film, will be held on Thursday, Dec. 20, at 5:30 p.m. at 16/90 T'ville Scoops (on the coffee side).

Those attending are invited to bring a few film-based photographs to show 'round the table.

• ACHS Volleyball Awards Ceremony held recently •



VARSITY - The 2018 Alexander Central Varsity Volleyball Award winners are pictured with Coach Leslie Herwig. Pictured from the left are: Kinsey Elder, Most Improved Player; Savanna Bowen, Sportsmanship Award; Lanie Goforth, Most Versatile Player; Madison Thomas, Most Heart for the Game Award; Olivia Benton, Most Valuable Player; and Coach Herwig.



JUNIOR VARSITY - The 2018 Alexander Central JV Volleyball Award winners are pictured with Coach Leslie Herwig. Pictured from the left are: Shelbi Coffey, Most Heart for the Game Award; Emily Brown, Sportsmanship Award; Brianna Abernathy, Most Valuable Player Award; Layne West, Most Versatile Player Award; Madeleine Jenkins, Most Improved Player Award; and Coach Herwig.



ACHS WOMEN'S GOLF AWARDS PRESENTED

- Alexander Central Women's Golf Coach Brent Durmire recently presented the following team awards at the banquet held at Brushy Mountain Golf Club; from the left: Heather Cronan, Sportsmanship Award; Jasmine Dessert, Most Valuable Player Award; and Jasmine Kerley, Most Improved Player Award.

ACHS Madrigal Feaste re-scheduled due to storm

The ACHS Madrigal Feaste has been RE-SCHEDULED for January 7th and 10th, 2019, due to inclement weather in the past week.

Those who have reservations for the previously planned performances in December will be con-

tacted by the Center's staff and will be given the option of choosing which date in January works best for continuing their reservations.

Contact the Hiddenite Arts and Heritage Center with any questions: 828-632-6966.

Merry Christmas

Thank you for your support throughout the year. May all the joy and blessings of this Christmas Season be yours.

HOSPICE AND HOME CARE ALEXANDER COUNTY, INC.
632-5026

May your faith be renewed and your spirits lifted as we celebrate the birth of our Savior. With best wishes to you and yours for a truly memorable holiday season.

Isaiah 9:6
For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

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