Winter weather, in addition to hazardous road conditions, brings with it a host of safety concerns. Your local fire fighters encourage you to prepare ahead and stay safe this winter.

**HEAT**

To counter the weather outside, many of us use fireplaces and space heaters or crank up the thermostat. Each of those presents its own safety concerns.

As we rely on furnaces to heat our homes, it is important to take a few moments to make sure yours has been professionally serviced so that it is clean and in proper working order. Check that the furnace is ventilated to the outside to prevent carbon monoxide from leaking into your home. Make sure all fireplaces and chimneys are inspected and clean before using them – and only burn approved fuels.

Space heaters are convenient but can be dangerous. Follow the manufacturers’ guidelines when using heaters. Always plug the heater directly into an outlet — do not use an extension cord. Do not put other electrical devices into the same outlet as portable heaters and always make sure flammable materials are a safe 3 feet from the heater. Unplug the heater when it is not in use and never leave a heater unattended.

When our homes are sealed up tight to keep the winter weather at bay, carbon monoxide poisoning becomes a more common problem. You can prevent carbon monoxide emergencies by never using a generator or propane-powered heater indoors and making sure all vents in the kitchen are open when you cook.

In addition, check that have a working carbon monoxide detector in your home and a plan to evacuate if the detector sounds. That plan should include calling 9-1-1 and staying out of your home until fire fighters say it is safe.

**VEHICLE SAFETY**

Driving in winter conditions is always a challenge, but by preparing for the drive, you can arrive at your destination safely. Regular maintenance for your vehicle is always important, but even more so in the winter months. Proper care for your vehicle’s battery, windshield wipers, wiper fluid and tires are all critical in the harsh winter months.

It is also advised to keep extra warm clothes, water, a flashlight or flares and a blanket in your car in case of an emergency. If you live in a snowy climate, keep a bag of sand in your trunk in case your car gets stuck. And don’t forget your ice scraper — it is essential for keeping your windows clear of ice and snow before driving.

Finally, don’t warm your car up indoors. This may sound obvious, but — remember — your garage counts as indoors.

**FIRE HYDRANTS**

Fire fighters also ask that you clear snow from your sidewalks and driveway. Do not pile snow near fire hydrants. If you see a hydrant with snow around it, please clear it. Fire hydrants buried in snow drifts can significantly slow down our response time. Your help in keeping hydrants clear will allow our team to focus on fighting the fire and not shoveling the snow.

Stay Safe and Stay Warm,

Your Local Fire Fighters