**ECHO Winter Weather Video:** <https://youtu.be/JyzUGYXtufw>

Cold, wind, and snow can make winter challenging for people who live and drive in Minnesota! Winter weather can start as early as October and last as late as April. Temperatures can drop far below freezing, and up to 40 inches of snow can fall during one winter! Winter is a beautiful time of year, but the snow, cold, and wind can be dangerous -- even fatal -- to animals and humans if they are not prepared.

To stay warm and safe, you and every member of your family should wear warm clothing from head to toe so that the skin does not freeze. Hats and coats should be big enough to fit you when you are wearing extra layers of clothing underneath. Mittens are warmer than gloves, and boots are safer than shoes because they won’t slip on ice, and they keep feet warm in deep snow. Children might need “snowsuits” or snow pants to keep warm while waiting for the school bus or playing. Don’t let them play outside for too long. Ice fishing, skating, snowmobiles, and sleds make the winter more fun, as long as everyone dresses warmly.

It is especially difficult to stay safe in winter if you go near water. Frozen lakes might look safe enough to cross, but ice is too thin to walk on unless it is four inches thick. If you dare to drive your car on ice, the ice will need to be twice as thick—eight inches. To make sure children remain safe, keep them away from waterways [ponds, lakes, rivers, etc.].

Children and elderly adults should watch out for frost-bite on fingers, toes, noses and ears. If skin is numb and very pale, go inside and warm the frostbite area slowly. If symptoms and pain are severe, see a doctor.

A good battery with a full charge should be strong enough to start the car in very cold weather. And make sure the heater works well enough to keep passengers warm and the windshield free of ice. Gas tanks should stay at least half full all winter so that the fuel line does not freeze. And before you get going [i.e. before you drive your car away from the place where it is parked], scrape the windows and make sure all exterior lights are visible to other drivers. It’s easy for cars to slip and slide on ice, so go slowly in the snow, especially on bridge. And make sure you leave enough room [in front of your car] to stop so that you don’t run into cars or snow plows. If you have an accident or your car breaks down, stay where you are! If you walk to get help, you could put yourself in serious danger. One last winter tip is to pack a winter car emergency kit! Then you will have tools to keep you safe and warm if the car breaks down, leaving you and your family out in the cold. ECHO will show you how….

1. When it’s cold, wear warm clothes, cover your skin, and don’t stay out too long.

2. Make sure ice is thick enough before you walk or drive on frozen lakes, rivers or streams.

3. Keep an emergency kit in your car – and stay with your car if you get stranded/stuck.