



WINTER WISE

Your handbook for
a safer Winter.

safetyinfo.ca



Home Heating
Safety

CO Safety

Renovations and
Maintenance

Winter
Recreation





WinterWise is a public safety awareness handbook. It's designed to provide you with the information you need to reduce risk and keep your family safe.

With everything from snow, ice, wind and chilling temperatures, winter tends to bring out, or keep in, two types of people – the homey sort, spending more time indoors with family and friends; and the outdoor sort, braving the elements for all the rosy-cheeked excitement they can muster.

Regardless what type of person you are, it's important to be “WinterWise” and help keep you and your family safe while enjoying all that the season has to offer.



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WinterWise 2015

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Stay safe and have fun
this winter.



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Be “WinterWise”

Although we tend to spend more time indoors during the winter, it is a season that provides great opportunities for outdoor fun and recreation. Whether you’re staying warm by the fire, or spending the day on the slopes, be “WinterWise” to help you and your family stay safe.



CO Safety

Carbon monoxide (CO) exposure is a deadly but common hazard in your home that can happen any time of year – especially when the cold, winter weather settles in, and we depend on things like our furnace or gas fireplace to heat up our homes.

Four Steps to CO Safety

To keep your home safe from CO hazards, follow these four steps:

1. Be aware of the hazard. Carbon monoxide (CO) is an invisible, odourless and poisonous gas that is produced by common household fuel-burning appliances such as your furnace, fireplace, stove, water heater, dryer, propane heater, kerosene lantern or any other fuel-burning equipment.

2. Eliminate CO at the source. Get your home's fuel-burning appliances and equipment inspected by a certified technician who works for a TSSA-registered heating contractor. To find a TSSA-registered contractor in your area, visit COSafety.ca.

3. Install certified CO alarms – it's now the law. They will warn you of rising CO levels, giving you time to take potentially life-saving action. For proper installation locations, follow manufacturer's instructions or ask your local fire department.

4. Know the symptoms of CO poisoning. They are similar to the flu – nausea, headache, burning eyes, confusion and drowsiness – except there is no fever. If they appear, immediately get everyone, including pets, outside to fresh air and call 911 and/or your local fire department.



1



2



3



4

Have you had your fuel-burning appliances inspected?

Your fuel-burning appliances need to be inspected annually by a registered heating contractor to maintain peak efficiency and protect your family from the dangers of carbon monoxide.

It is the smart thing to do and it is your responsibility.

Be sure to use a heating contractor registered by the Technical Standards and Safety Authority. To find a TSSA-registered contractor in your area, visit COSafety.ca.



TAKE ACTION
COSafety.ca



Alarm Yourself

In addition to ensuring that your home's fuel-burning equipment has been inspected professionally, your next important line of defence against CO is having properly installed and maintained alarms.

It's now the law that carbon monoxide alarms be installed in every residence in Ontario.

When it comes to alarms, here are some helpful tips.

DO install CO alarms:

- On every level of your home
- Near sleeping areas
- According to manufacturer's instructions

DO NOT install CO alarms near:

- Windows or vents
- Bathrooms
- Heating or fuel-burning appliances
- Smoke alarms
(unless combination alarm)

The Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs recommends that you know your fire department's phone number and keep it posted by every phone in your home.

Checklist

- Check the manufacturer's instructions to find out when your particular unit should be replaced (usually after 7-10 years for CO alarms and 10 years for smoke alarms)
- Test CO and smoke alarms once a month by pushing the test button
- Replace batteries once a year, including back-up batteries for plug-in alarms; use fall daylight savings time as a reminder
- Replace CO alarms when required



Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs
Association canadienne des chefs de pompiers

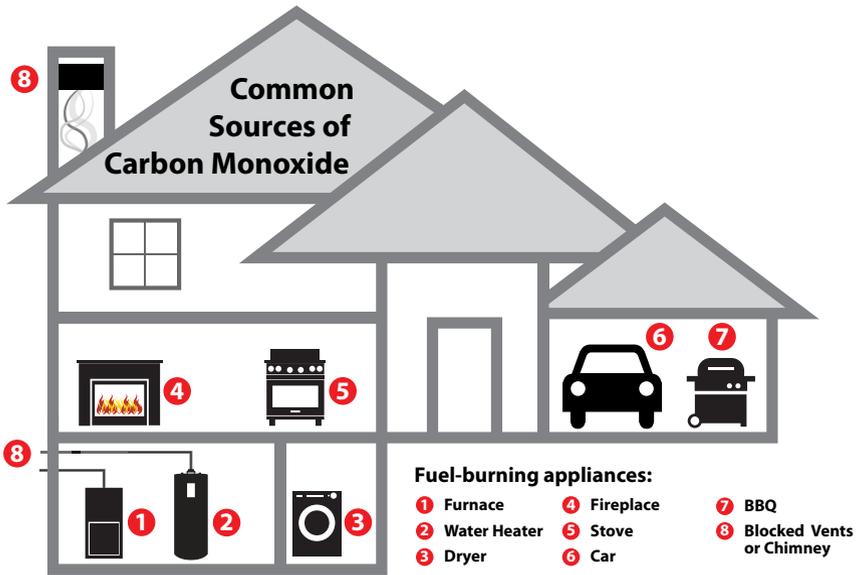
Beat The Silent Killer

In Ontario, over **80%** of all
carbon monoxide deaths and
injuries occur in homes.



**TAKE ACTION -
COSafety.ca**





You can help prevent carbon monoxide from harming you and your family by:

1. Getting an annual inspection for all fuel-burning appliances in your home.
2. Installing and regularly testing carbon monoxide alarms.

TAKE ACTION
COsafety.ca



Home Heating Safety



In Canada, we depend on our heating systems to keep us safe and warm when the thermometer plunges and the snow falls, so it is vitally important to check and maintain your furnace and/or fireplace.



An Annual Inspection is a Must

Heating systems that burn fuel such as gas, oil or wood need to be inspected and maintained annually. It is the only way to ensure efficient and safe operation.

For furnaces, while you can and should change filters and check for leaks, the only person qualified to inspect your natural gas, propane or oil furnace is a certified technician who works for a TSSA-registered contractor.



All certified heating technicians are registered with TSSA. To find a TSSA-registered contractor in your area, visit COSafety.ca.

Remember, furnace and fireplace inspections are your responsibility. If you do not arrange it, it will not get done. Do not forget to have your furnace, fireplace or any fuel-burning appliance inspected annually!

Getting started:

- Ask a friend or your fuel supplier for recommendations
- Obtain at least three written estimates specifying the work to be done, who will do the work, as well as start and completion dates
- Determine whether repairs are covered by a warranty; avoid 'fly-by-nighters', especially people who show up at your door offering special deals

Your Home Heating System

To keep your home heating system working the way it should this season; there are actions that you as the owner can take, but there are things that need to be performed by a professional.

Safety Tips

Do-It-Yourself

- Examine the heating system occasionally for signs of deterioration, such as water stains, corrosion or leakage; in forced-air systems, clean the furnace air filters frequently – at least twice a heating season

- Keep the area around the furnace free from dust, lint, rags, paint, drain cleaners and other materials or chemicals that could catch fire or explode if they become too hot
- Make sure warm-air outlets and cold-air outlets are not covered by carpets or blocked by debris
- Make sure walls, other obstructions or new renovations do not block the heating system's air supply

Call a professional

- If your heating system stops working, check the electrical fuse, the switch and the thermostat, and then call for a heating technician
- If snow or ice covers your outdoor regulator, contact your fuel supplier
- Under no circumstances should unqualified people tamper with heating systems; if you have questions or concerns, contact a qualified heating contractor or call TSSA at 1-877-682-8772 (TSSA)

Gas Fireplaces – Too Hot for Tots

Every year, children are burned from contact with the glass barrier at the front of a gas fireplace. Statistics show that contact burns – injuries sustained when a part of the body touches a hot object – are the second leading cause of burns in children.

Children have been burned when they have fallen towards the gas fireplace and have pushed up against the hot glass for balance. Serious third-degree burns are the result. Others have touched the glass only for a moment out of curiosity. It takes just two seconds to be seriously burned. Many children have been burned while parents are in the room.



Children are not only at risk for burns when the gas fireplace is in use but before and after use too. The glass barrier can heat up to more than 200°C in about six minutes during use. It takes an average of 45 minutes for the fireplace to cool to a safe temperature after a fire has been extinguished. Some children have even been burned when the fireplace is not in use, by the heat from the ignition light. Children are at risk of a burn injury whenever they are around a gas fireplace.

Young children **under five years of age** are at an increased risk for getting burned by the glass barrier



Young children **under two years**, are at an even greater risk for getting burned by the glass barrier

To keep your child safe around gas fireplaces:

- Never leave a young child alone near a gas fireplace; they can be burned before, during, and after use of the fireplace
- Create a barrier around the gas fireplace; safety guards can be installed to keep your child at a safe distance at all times
- Teach children about the dangers of fire; children are fascinated by heat and fire and may not understand the dangers
- Consider not using the fireplace if you have young children less than five years of age, using it only after your children have gone to sleep, or consider turning the unit off completely, including the ignition flame, whenever the unit is not in use
- Be aware of contact burn dangers from irons, curling irons, radiators, older oven doors, wood-burning stoves, and fireplaces

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45

MINUTES

It takes an average of 45 minutes for the fireplace to cool to a safe temperature after a fire has been extinguished



Your Wood Stove or Fireplace

This time of year, it can be comforting to curl up beside a crackling fireplace, or gather family and friends around the warmth of a wood stove. Take the necessary steps now to ensure that wood stoves and fireplaces are operating properly and free of potential hazards.



Check stove pipes and connections

Ensure that screws are located at every joint and that each connection is a tight, secure fit. Also, look for signs of dark staining or white powder (also referred to as leeching) at every joint. Rust is a clear sign that it is time to replace the stove pipe.

Check walls for excessive heat

If the wall above your fireplace or wood stove gets very hot, it could be a sign of improper chimney installation and a potential fire hazard.

Protect walls and floors from heat and sparks

Keep combustible objects away from your wood stove or fireplace and always use a properly fitted screen to cover the fireplace opening. Floors and walls should be protected with non-combustible shields.

Watch for the warning signs

Look for corrosion or rust on the outer shell of a metal chimney. Watch for bulges or corrosion of the liner as well. Loose bricks, crumbling mortar, dark stains and white powder all indicate problems with a masonry chimney. It should be repaired immediately by a certified heating contractor or mason.



When in doubt, call an expert

The safest and most practical way to handle the annual maintenance of your chimney, woodstove and fireplace is to contact a WETT® certified Chimney Sweep. It is a relatively small investment for peace of mind.

**Wood Energy Technology Transfer*

Your Portable Space Heater

Electric space heaters are a handy way to add a little extra warmth to one corner of the house without turning up the furnace. However, electric space heaters can be a hazard if used improperly. Follow the manufacturer's instructions and these safety tips to stay safe and warm:

- Never use space heaters to dry flammable items such as clothing or blankets
- Keep all flammable objects at least one metre away from space heaters
- If you use an extension cord, make sure it is the right size and gauge to carry the electrical load being drawn by the space heater
- Never use an electrical space heater in a wet area or any area that can be exposed to water
- Supervise children and pets at all times when a portable space heater is in use



Never use fuel-burning portable space heaters (such as propane or kerosene) in any enclosed space, as it can lead to deadly carbon monoxide exposure



Fresh Air – Let Your House Breathe

In attempting to conserve energy and reduce our heating costs, we can sometimes make our homes too air tight. In fact, for a house to be healthy, it needs to “breathe”. It needs to expel moisture and other gases from inside and take in a constant supply of fresh air from outside.

When a fuel-burning appliance in your home does not get enough fresh air and fails to completely burn its fuel, carbon monoxide is produced.

If ventilation is damaged or blocked, or if you have a powerful kitchen fan, bathroom fan or open hearth fireplace, then carbon monoxide can be drawn back inside the house.

Exhaust fans can compound the problem

Be mindful that the air you exhaust from your home has to be replaced. Powerful exhaust fans in bathrooms and kitchens or open hearth wood-burning fireplaces can actually create a negative pressure inside your home, resulting in a backdraft which will draw exhaust fumes from your furnace, hot water heater or other appliances back into the house.

How can you tell if your home is too airtight?

- The air inside your home is usually stuffy and stale

- Excessive condensation is dripping down your windows (which could also mean your humidifier is set too high, so check that first)
- The pilot light on your gas appliance keeps going out
- A gas flame burns yellow instead of blue (except in the case of a natural gas fireplace)
- The smell of exhaust gases is present in your home; although you cannot smell carbon monoxide, other exhaust gases do have an odour

If you see any of these signs, contact a registered heating contractor or a building ventilation expert to check your home and correct the problem.

Consider these solutions:

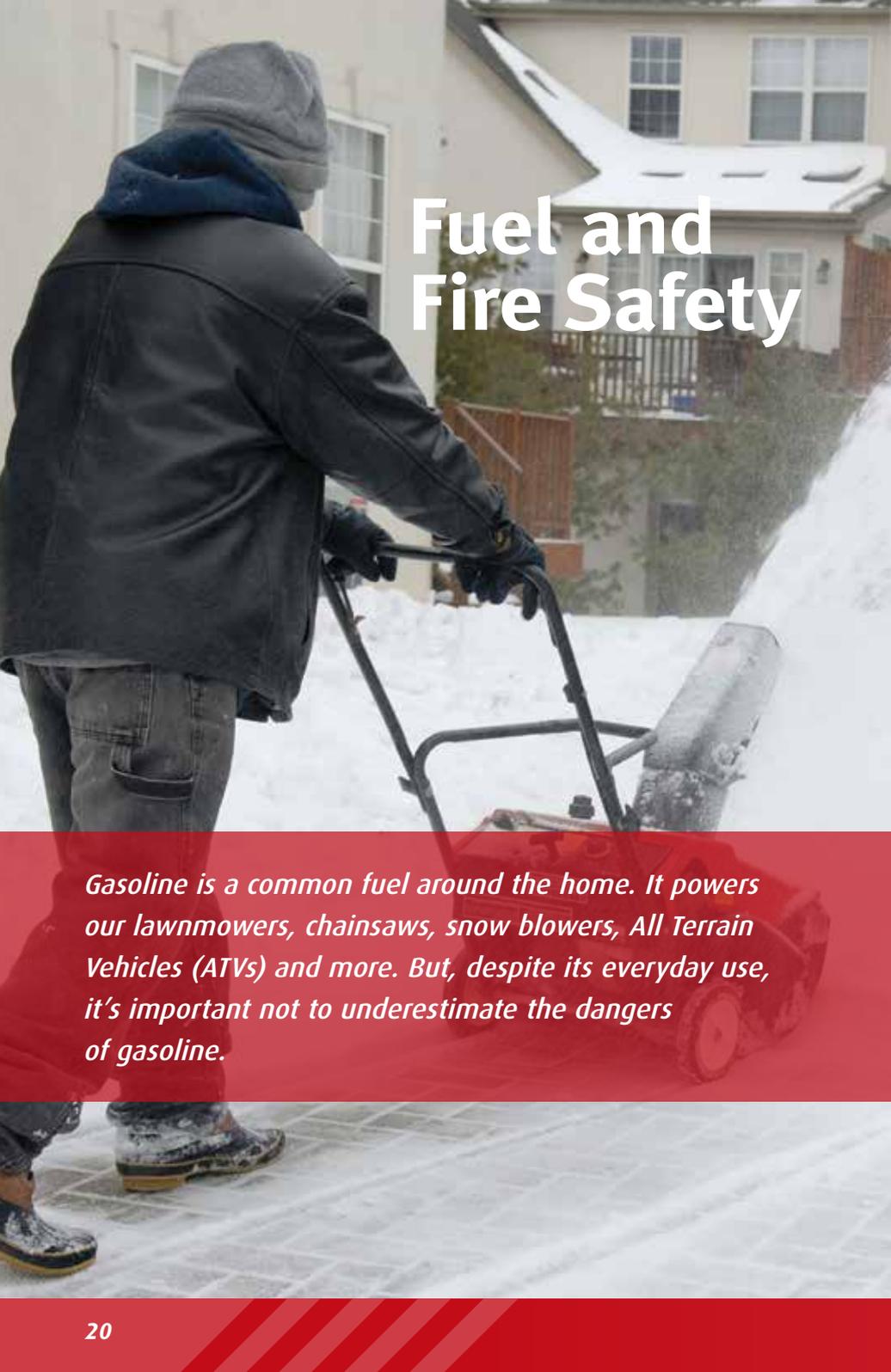
Air exchanger

If your home is tightly sealed to make it energy efficient, consider investing in an air exchange system. Professionally installed, it exchanges the air inside your home for fresh outside air every 24 hours, without wasting heat.

Direct feed

When renovating or building, consider installing heating systems and appliances that have a direct feed of outside air for combustion, so they do not draw air from inside the home. The combustion chambers are sealed so they are safer and more energy efficient.



A person wearing a grey beanie, a dark jacket, and gloves is operating a red snow blower in a residential driveway. The driveway is covered in snow, and a house with a snow-covered roof is visible in the background. The scene is set in winter.

Fuel and Fire Safety

Gasoline is a common fuel around the home. It powers our lawnmowers, chainsaws, snow blowers, All Terrain Vehicles (ATVs) and more. But, despite its everyday use, it's important not to underestimate the dangers of gasoline.

Treat Fuel with Care

When running a gas-powered engine:

- Keep a BC Class fire extinguisher handy. Water will only spread the flames of a gasoline-based fire
- Never work or idle in an enclosed space such as a garage, basement or tent
- Allow equipment to cool down for a few minutes before refuelling

Storage

Do not leave gasoline in the basement of your home or in the cottage. Store fuel in approved containers in a detached garage or shed, and well away from heat sources including direct sunlight.

Filling Containers

- Only use fuel containers that have been certified by an accredited certification organization such as the Canadian Standards Association (CSA) International or the Underwriters Laboratories of Canada (ULC)
- Keep well away from sparks or ignition sources
- Fill only to about 90 per cent of capacity to allow some room for expansion
- When filling, keep portable containers on the ground, with the dispensing nozzle in full contact with the container in order to prevent buildup and discharge of static electricity – a possible source of ignition

- When you are finished refilling the container, tighten both the fill and vent caps
- Never leave the container in direct sunlight or in the trunk of a car

Disposal



The best way to dispose of gasoline is to use it up. Small amounts can be left outside to evaporate – leave in an open container away from children and pets.

If gasoline must be discarded, be sure to take it to the hazardous waste disposal centre in your area. Never pour gasoline onto the ground, down sewers or into drains.



Fire Safety in Apartment Buildings

Q: Does your apartment have at least one working smoke alarm?

→ Test monthly and replace batteries annually to ensure it works properly.

Q: Do you have a roll of duct tape? → Duct tape is a special tape available from hardware stores. Use it to block smoke from entering your apartment through spaces around your doors, vents and other openings.

Q: Do you know how you are going to escape from your building if there is a fire? → Most apartment buildings have at least two exit stairways. Find out where these are and practice using them. Know which floors you can use to cross from one stairway to another.

Q: Have you told your landlord or building manager that you will need help in an emergency? → Your apartment number can be added to the fire safety plan, so firefighters will know that you may need to be rescued.

Q: Do you know where the fire alarms are on your floor, and how to pull them? → Ask your landlord or building manager where they are and how to use them.

Q: Have you arranged a place outside the building where you will meet everyone you share your apartment with after you leave? → Having a meeting place gives you confidence that everyone got out safely.

Q: Do you know the telephone number to call if there is a fire?
→ Keep this telephone number in a place where you can find it fast in an emergency.

Being prepared can help save your life. Talk to your building's management or fire department for more details.



INSTALL SMOKE ALARMS

IT'S THE LAW

Every home in Ontario must have
a working smoke alarm on every storey
and outside all sleeping areas.



Prevent Cooking Fires

Watch what you heat

Cooking fires are the number one cause of home fires and home fire injuries in Canada and the U.S., according to the National Fire Prevention Association (NFPA). Most of these fires can be prevented by following simple fire safety steps.

Safety Tips

- Never leave cooking unattended; two out of five deaths in home cooking fires occur because the cooking was unattended
- Keep the cooking area clean; always wipe appliances and surfaces after cooking to prevent grease buildup
- Do not store combustible objects near the stove; curtains, potholders, dish towels and food packaging can easily catch fire
- Always turn pot handles inwards; turning handles toward the centre of the stove can prevent pots from being knocked off the stove or pulled down by small children
- Wear short or close-fitting sleeves when cooking; fires can occur when clothing comes in contact with stovetop burners
- Do not overheat cooking oil
- Cooking oil can easily start a fire so never leave hot oil or grease-laden foods unattended; if you must leave the room, even for a short period of time, turn the burner down to simmer, or off completely
- Teach children about safe cooking; young children should be kept at least one metre away from the stove while older family members are cooking and older children should cook only with permission and under the supervision of a grown up



What to do if a cooking fire starts

Pot: put a lid on it. If a pan catches fire, carefully slide a lid over the pan using a high cuff oven mitt and turn off the stove burner. Leave the lid on until completely cool! Do not carry the burning pan to a sink or outside. Movement may permit oxygen to the fire allowing it to ignite, or cause hot grease to spill and cause burns.

Oven or microwave: keep the door shut and turn off the heat. If flames do not go out immediately, call the fire department. Opening the oven or microwave door allows oxygen to the fire and increases the potential for the fire to spread beyond the appliance.

Never pour water on a grease fire. Water causes grease fires to flare and spread.

If a pan catches on fire, put a lid on it using a high cuff oven mitt



Know the emergency number for your fire department.

Always call your local fire department before attempting to fight a fire.

Always keep a fire extinguisher at the kitchen door. Know how to use it. Only use it if you have a clear escape route and the fire department has been called first.



Know Your Fire Extinguishers

Not all fire extinguishers are alike. They are designed for specific types of fire. There are three general types of fire extinguishers:

Class A – fires involving ordinary combustibles such as wood, cloth or paper;

Class B – fires involving flammable liquids, greases, gases, etc.; and

Class C – charged electrical equipment fires.

Choose a multi-purpose fire extinguisher to put out all classes of fires.



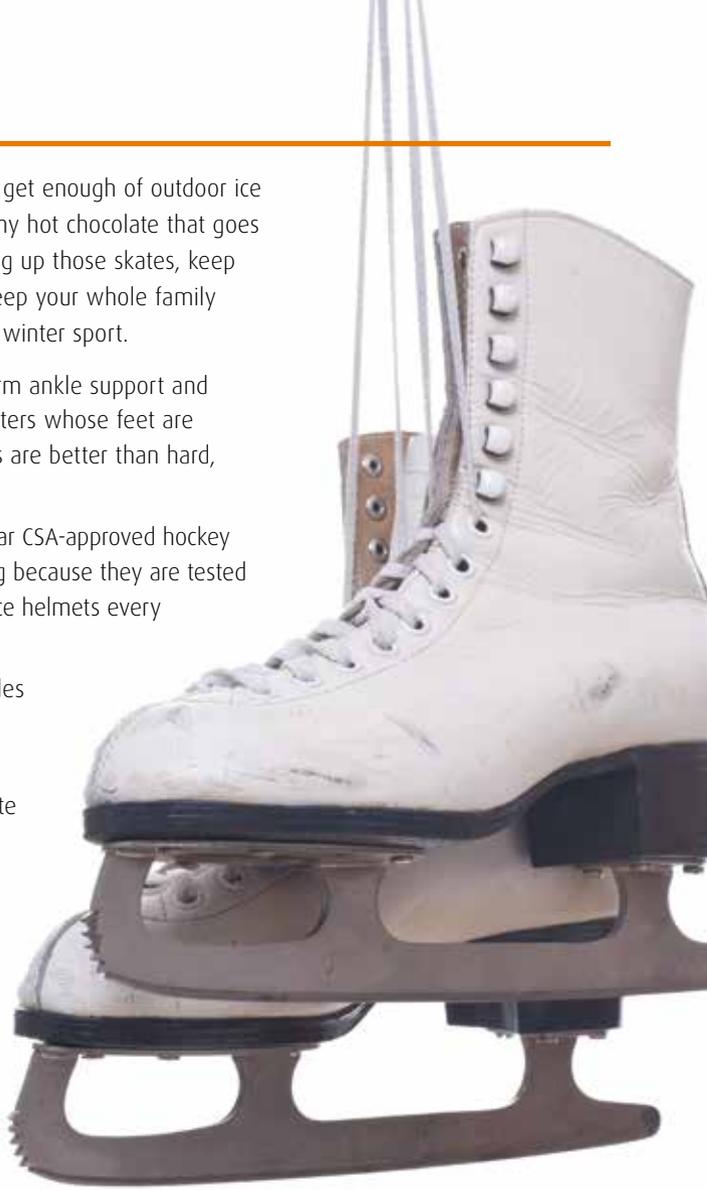
Winter Recreation

Winter offers some of the most unique opportunities for fun and recreation. Whether you're skating, skiing, snowmobiling or sledding, a few simple safety precautions can help you stay safe.

Ice Skating

Canadian families can't get enough of outdoor ice skating – and the yummy hot chocolate that goes with it! But before lacing up those skates, keep these tips in mind to keep your whole family on the safe side of this winter sport.

- Skates should give firm ankle support and fit snugly; for youngsters whose feet are growing, softer boots are better than hard, unyielding ones
- All skaters should wear CSA-approved hockey helmets when skating because they are tested for falls on ice. Replace helmets every five years
- Check that skate blades aren't dull or rusted
- Teach children to skate only in places you know are safe
- Check that the ice surface is in good shape without bumps, melting or slushy ice
- Check for skating hazards such as pebbles, rocks and branches
- Ice on frozen ponds, rivers, lakes or canals should be at least 15 cm thick and 20 cm for skating parties or games; beware of quick thaws, which can weaken the ice surface
- Teach children to skate with friends – never alone – and always in safe areas, away from traffic and free of obstacles



Sledding and Tobogganing

Tobogganing is a great winter tradition and an excellent way for children to stay active and enjoy the outdoors. However, with any activity there are a number of precautions you can take to ensure your kids are safe.

- Ensure that the hill is free of hazards – trees, rocks, bumps, fences, and bare spots; do not sled on ice-covered areas
- Ensure that the hill is situated away from roads, rivers or railroads and that there is plenty of room to stop at the bottom of the hill
- Look for a hill which is not too steep (less than 30 degrees is recommended for children) and has a long, clear runoff area
- Inspect the toboggan to ensure it is in good condition
- Use only proper sliding equipment with good brakes and steering; inner tubes and plastic discs are not recommended because they are difficult to control
- The safest position to be in while tobogganing is kneeling
- After tobogganing, children should get out of wet clothes and boots quickly to prevent frostbite
- Young children should always be supervised by an adult; they should never toboggan alone
- Sliding headfirst offers the least protection from a head injury while laying flat on the back increases the risk of injuring the spine or spinal cord
- Look out for the other guy – move quickly to the side and walk up and away from the sliding path after finishing a run
- Children should not toboggan at night

Head injuries while sledding can be serious. A ski helmet is recommended because it is designed for use in cold weather and for similar falls and speeds.

Many tobogganing injuries are cold-related, such as frostbite and hypothermia. Heat loss is particularly significant in children under age three because their heads account for a larger proportion of their overall body size. Children should be dressed warmly in layers.



Snowmobile Safety

Use the Signals

Follow the nationally-approved snowmobile hand signals to ensure safety on the trails for everyone.



Practise Zero Alcohol

Alcohol is involved in over 70 per cent of snowmobiling fatalities.

Even small amounts of alcohol can impair perception, slow reaction time and limit ability to control your sled. Operating your sled under the influence of alcohol is punishable under the Criminal Code of Canada. If convicted of driving a snowmobile while impaired, you will lose all driving privileges (car, truck, motorcycle, off-road vehicles and snowmobile).

Night Riding

Nine out of ten fatalities occur after dark. Slow down, don't overdrive your headlights. Becoming disoriented or lost is much more likely at night.

Wear outer clothing with reflective trim on the arms, back and helmet. Never ride alone at night. Always dress in your full snowmobiling outfit even if your intended destination is just next-door.

Defensive Snowmobiling

Engine noise and your helmet may impair your hearing, so be extra alert for danger. Never assume what another snowmobiler will do. Your safety is in your own hands, so watch out for a variety of trail conditions.

Crossing Ice



If you do travel across lakes or rivers, know the conditions before you go and only cross following marked stake lines. Carry ice picks and wear a buoyant snowmobile suit in the event an emergency self-rescue needs to be performed.

Reprinted with permission of the Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs www.ofsc.on.ca



Understanding Winter Weather

Hypothermia: Dress warmly to prevent hypothermia. Cover up and layer well, making sure that nothing is too tight or left exposed.

Snow Blindness: Ride with good quality, UV-protected sunglasses or a tinted visor.

Wind Chill: Wind-proof outer garments, extra layers and a balaclava will offer some protection, but keep your face shield down to prevent wind burn and to protect your skin and eyes.

Shovelling Snow – Safely

Snow removal is often done in a rush to get to work on time, or to finish as fast as possible.

The good news is that 15 minutes of light snow shovelling is considered moderate physical activity. Canada's Physical Activity Guide says we should aim for at least 60 minutes of daily moderate physical activity of some kind.



The bad news is that research has shown an increase in the number of fatal heart attacks among individuals shovelling snow following heavy snowfalls. This may be due to the sudden demand that shovelling in cold weather places on an individual's heart and body.

While not everyone who shovels snow will suffer an injury or a heart attack, it can be good exercise when performed correctly and with safety in mind.

Who should think twice about shovelling snow?

- People who have existing health problems, or injuries
- Older individuals
- Anyone who has had a previous heart attack
- People with family or personal history of heart disease, high blood pressure or high cholesterol levels
- Smokers
- People leading a sedentary lifestyle

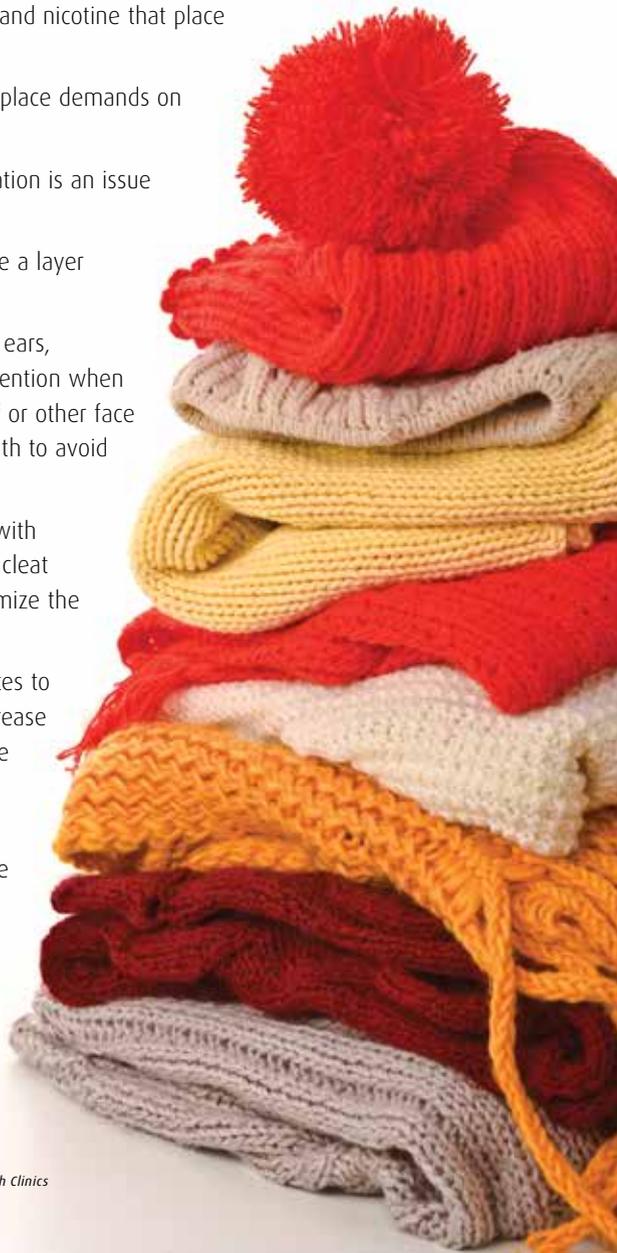
Older individuals should think twice before they shovel snow



dress in layers

Prior to Shovelling

- Avoid stimulants like caffeine and nicotine that place extra stress on the heart
- Avoid eating large meals that place demands on the digestive system
- Drink plenty of water; dehydration is an issue in winter as it is in summer
- Dress in several layers; remove a layer as needed
- Extremities, such as the nose, ears, hands and feet need extra attention when it is cold outside; place a scarf or other face protection over the nose/mouth to avoid breathing cold air
- Wear proper footwear; boots with slip-resistant soles or anti-slip cleat attachments can help to minimize the risk of slips and falls
- Warm-up for five-to-ten minutes to get the joints moving and increase blood circulation; march on the spot, climb stairs, or go for a quick walk around the block
- After warm-up, perform gentle stretches for the back (i.e. knees to chest), arms and shoulders (i.e. body hug), and legs (i.e. forward bends from a seated position). This will ensure that your body is ready for action



First Time Skiers and Snowboarders

Top five safety tips

Discovering and learning something new can be a little nerve-wracking, but exciting at the same time. Whether you're out on the hills skiing or snowboarding, learn how to be safe.

Here's how:

- 1 Dress appropriately:** Dress in layers and avoid wearing cotton. Remember to bring water-resistant gloves or mittens, goggles and sunscreen.
- 2 Get the right gear:** Use the rental shop at your local ski hill to get properly fitted boots, bindings, poles and skis/snowboards. Helmets are also often rentable and recommended – just be sure to educate yourself on the benefits and limitations. Check on any mandatory helmet requirements being enforced at the ski hill you're visiting.

- 3 Take a lesson:** Gain some good basics. Most ski hills offer lessons with trained and certified ski and snowboard instructors that will help you get comfortable on the slopes.

- 4 Follow the rules:** Follow the Alpine Responsibility Code and colour-coded symbol trail signs. Your primary safety consideration and obligation

is to ski and ride in a controlled and responsible manner.

- 5 Ride safe on ski lifts:** Listen to the lift attendants and be aware of all signs during your ski lift ride. If you're unsure, look for instructional posters and ask the attendant for help. For chairlifts, always use the safety bar. And remember – lift the bar only when you've reached the "Raise Bar Here" sign.

So what's the last thing to remember? Know your limits. Skiing and snowboarding can be tiring, so take breaks and pack it in if you feel exhausted.

For these and other important safety tips, visit www.safetyinfo.ca. For a guide to various ski resorts across Ontario, visit www.skiontario.ca.

Always use the safety bar on a chairlift



TIPS FOR SKI LIFT SAFETY

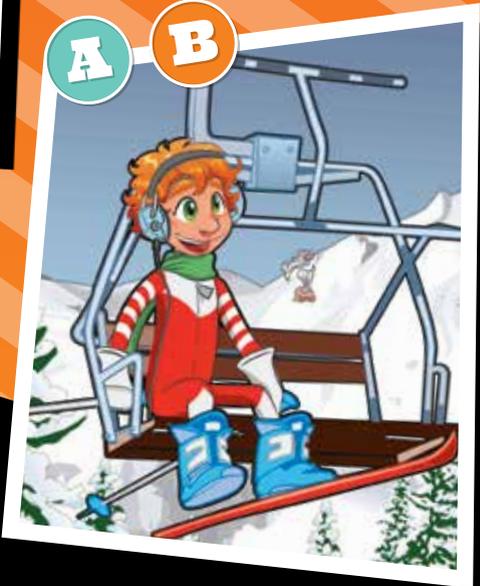
A



Can you **SPOT EIGHT?** *differences*?

Which child is practising safe riding on the ski lift?

A **B**



tssakidszone.ca

Answers: 1. Safety bar down on one lift 2. Sitting in the middle of the chair 3. No headphones and wearing a helmet 4. Poles correctly held 5. Scarf colour change 6. Pattern change on sleeve 7. Missing ski 8. Mountain goat
CHILD A is practising safe riding on the ski lift, because of answers 1-4

A man wearing a blue hoodie, a white cap, and safety glasses is using a power tool, possibly a nail gun, on a wall. He is standing in a snowy environment, and the wall behind him has a wooden shingle pattern. The scene is set in winter, with snow on the ground and a white sheet covering part of the wall.

Winter Renovations

A little planning can save you time and money on home renovation projects. Whether it's a big job or a small one, home renovations are generally expensive and time-consuming. When done right, they can reap huge benefits by creating a more comfortable space to live and increasing resale value.

Contract for Success

If you are planning a home renovation this winter or spring, the Ministry of Consumer Services has a few key tips to keep in mind to save you time and money, and help you reduce stress.

Make a plan

First, it is important to be clear about exactly what you are looking for in a renovation, and to stick with that vision throughout the project. Many people find it helpful to put their plan in writing to avoid costly changes that can lead to delays. Remember the following:

- For major projects, it can be helpful to get professional advice from, for example, a lawyer, tradesperson or an architect; a little expertise can go a long way
- Check with the appropriate authority, such as your municipality, about permits (electrical, plumbing, building, etc.); nothing slows down a project more than being told you cannot continue without a permit

***Find a good contractor.
Reliable, honest, licensed
contractors are everywhere.***

You just need to know where to find them – and how to avoid the bad ones!

- Ask friends or family members who have done similar renovation work recently for their recommendations
- Find a contractor who has a track record on projects like yours, since not all contractors can do – or are licensed for – all types of work; for example, a contractor with a licence to do electrical work may not be licensed to do gas work or plumbing
- You can check if a contractor you are considering has been the subject of consumer complaints by visiting www.ontario.ca/ConsumerBeware

Get an accurate estimate

Take the time to ask at least three contractors to make an on-site visit, and supply you with a written estimate that includes:

- Everything relevant to the job at hand; be clear about how you will handle any changes to the terms of the estimate
- Details on the terms of payment, including deposits; a schedule of payments if done in instalments; and full details about the contractor
- Avoid cash or “tax-free” deals which may seem appealing, but if things don’t work out, you won’t have proof of payment without a receipt and “tax-free” may be a red flag that a business may be unscrupulous

(again, visit the www.ontario.ca/ConsumerBeware site to see if contractors offering special deals have been the subject of complaints)

Sign a contract

A written contract protects everyone – the homeowner and the contractor.

But it's surprising how many "horror stories" could've been avoided with a little attention to detail when signing contracts. Read the fine print – if anything doesn't look right, confirm it with the contractor. Or ask a lawyer or friend with experience in contracts to review it with you.

And remember; if you have signed an agreement worth more than \$50, you have ten days to cancel if you change your mind.

Seniors: take credit!

In Ontario, seniors (or non-seniors living with a family member who is a senior) can take advantage of the Healthy Homes Renovation Tax Credit. This credit is a permanent, refundable Personal Income Tax Credit to assist with the cost of permanent home modifications that improve accessibility, or help a senior to be more functional or mobile at home.

Here are some details:

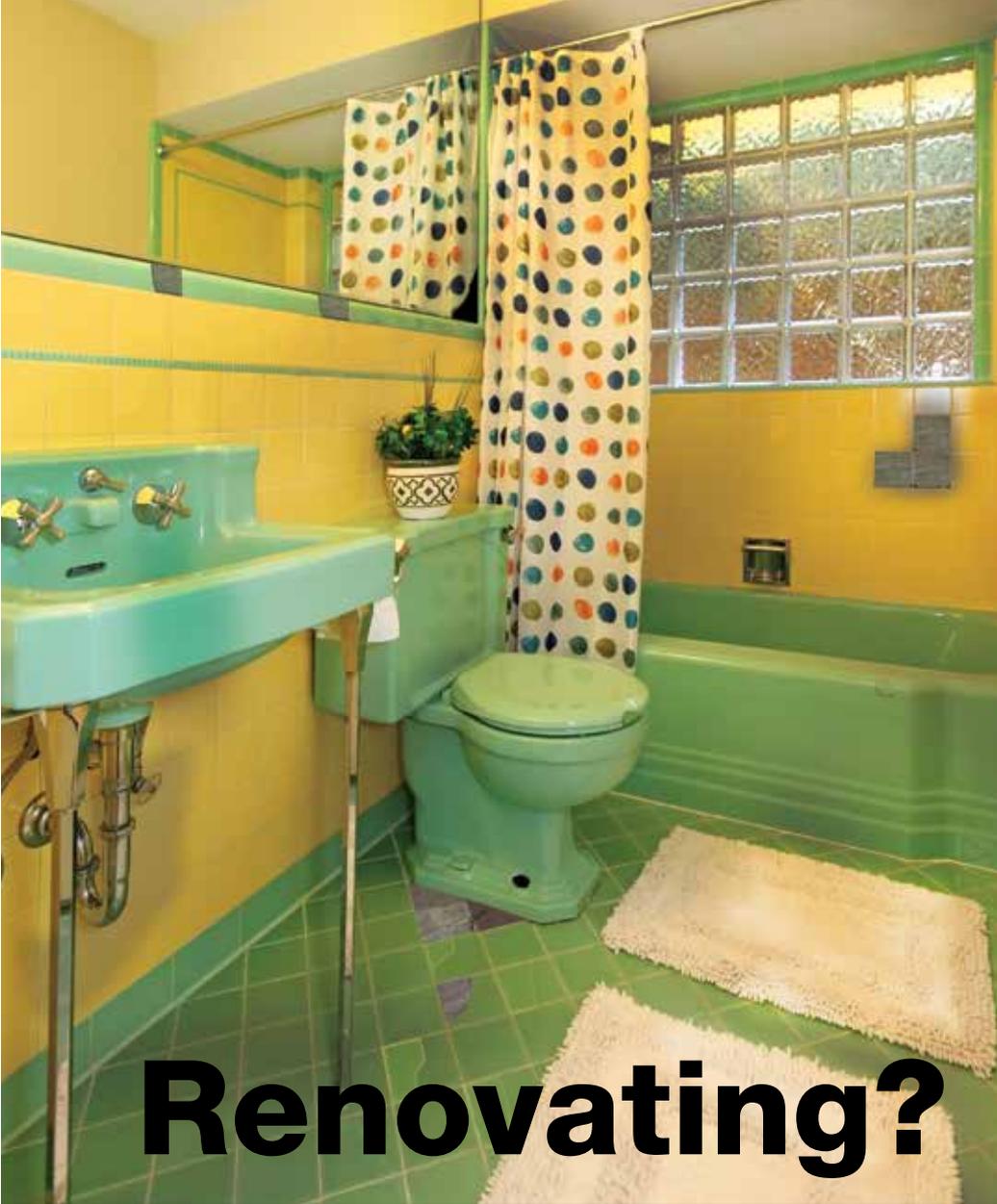
- The credit is worth up to \$1,500 each year, calculated as 15 per cent of up to \$10,000 in eligible home renovation expenses that will help seniors stay safely in their homes
- Together, both members of a couple can claim no more \$10,000 in eligible expenses in a year

For more details on the credit, visit www.fin.gov.on.ca/en/credit/hhrtc/index.html.

Fixing up a home can be one of the most rewarding projects you will undertake – if you do it wisely. By following a few simple tips, all the hard work and planning can pay off for a long time to come. For more tips on any aspect of renovating a home, visit www.ontario.ca/homerenos

Always get it in writing – a written contract protects everyone





Renovating?

We can help avoid costly mistakes.

Visit www.ontario.ca/homerenos for tips before hiring a contractor.

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Plug In Safely – Avoid Common Electrical Hazards in Your Home



Avoid damaged or unsafe cords

Frayed or damaged extension cords or cord ends can expose wires, resulting in potential shock and fire hazards. Incorrect use of extension cords can create potential shock and fire hazards.

Here are some safety tips to remember when using extension cords:

- Always check to ensure they bear the mark of a recognized certification agency; for a list of agencies, visit www.esasafe.com
- Check cords regularly and replace if they are worn or damaged. Look for worn insulation, splices on the cord and loose or exposed plug parts
- Select the appropriate cord for the application; note some cords are designed for interior use only, and others for exterior use
- Extension cords are normally rated in amps, and must be used within the ampere rating; always follow manufacturer's instructions
- Never run cords around doorways, under carpeting and/or furniture
- If outdoors, ensure connections are above the ground and away from water and high traffic areas
- Never remove the third prong, or try to force a three-pronged plug into a two-pronged outlet

- It's recommended to unplug extension cords that aren't in use
- Extension cords are only to be used for temporary purposes. They do not replace the need for installation of outlets and proper wiring where necessary
- Consult with a licensed electrical contractor for information on how you can update your home's wiring system



Overloading and overheating outlets

Electrical systems are designed to carry electricity safely throughout our homes. Overloading an electrical circuit by plugging in too many electrical items draws more electricity through the system than it was designed to carry. This can create overheating and result in fire.

Avoid overloading:

- If fuses frequently blow or circuits frequently trip, this is a sign the system is overloaded
- Always use the correctly rated fuse; for example, don't use a 30 amp fuse to replace an existing 15 amp fuse
- Using multi-outlet extension cords can lead to plugging too many items into a single circuit

- Avoid overloading circuits; fuses that frequently blow or circuit breakers that trip can be a sign of overloading on the circuit

When replacing outlets, contact a licensed electrical contractor if you are uncertain of the load rating for your home's wiring.



Check for hidden electrical hazards

Damaged or deteriorated wires can present shock or fire hazard. Avoid potential hazards by:

- Watching for dim or flickering lights, which can be a sign of a loose connection in a lighting circuit, fixture, or your electrical service

- Check for overheated plugs or outlets, which can indicate overloading or possibly faulty electrical wiring or equipment
- Remember, if you have Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter outlets they should be tested monthly, as per manufacturer's instructions, to ensure they are operating properly



The Electrical Safety Authority recommends using a Licensed Electrical Contractor. Visit www.esasafe.com for a list of Licensed Electrical Contractors in Ontario.

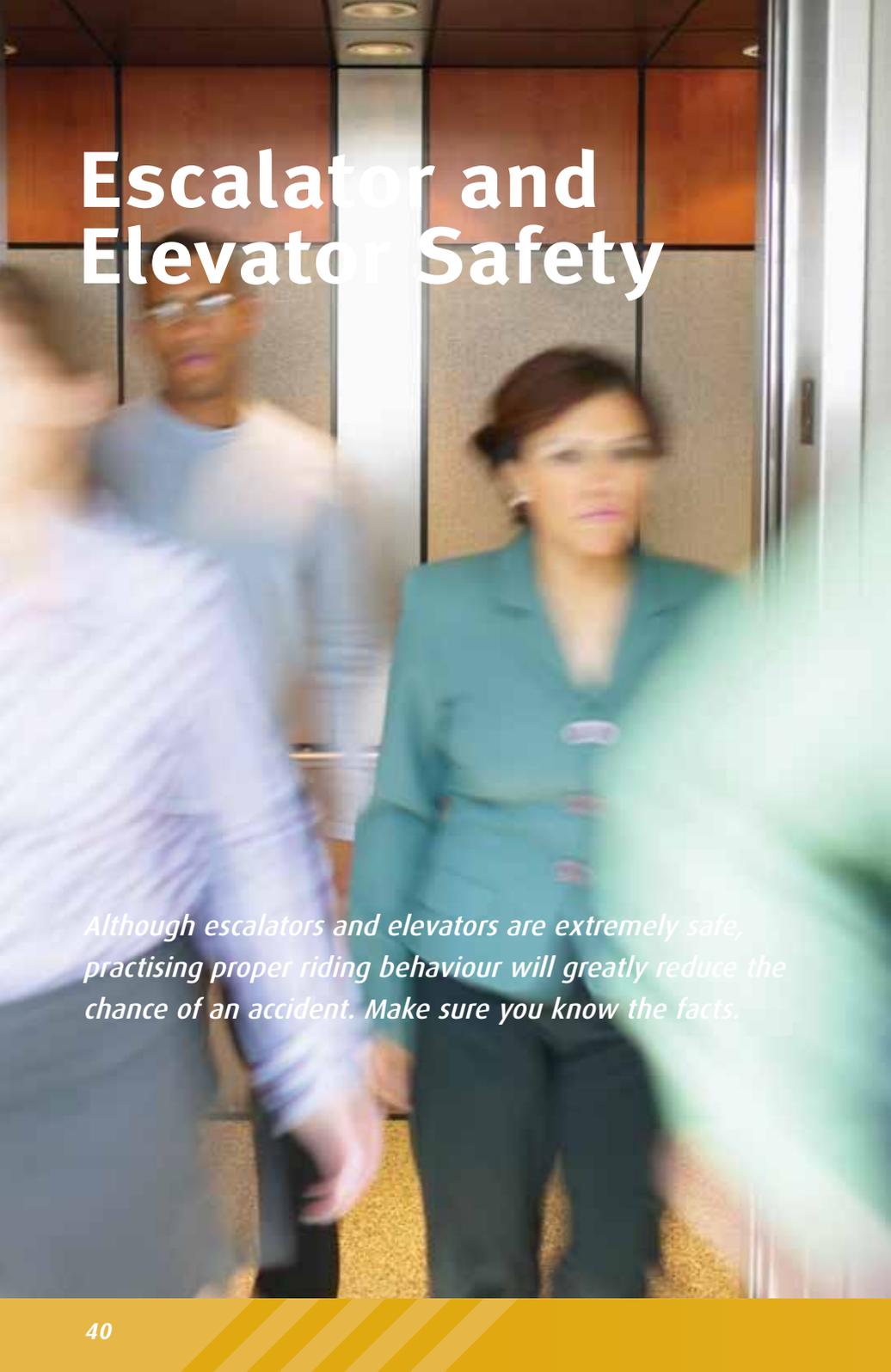
If planning to do electrical work, consider the following:

- Do I understand my home's electrical system?
- Do I know the rules and requirements for electrical wiring and installations in the most recent edition of the Ontario Electrical Safety Code?
- Do I know the risks associated with different wiring installations?
- Am I confident that the electrical work previous owners did meets Ontario Electrical Safety Code requirements?
- Have I made arrangements for an Application for Inspection?
- Call 1-877-372-7233 to check your inspection requirements.
- If you are not familiar with your home's electrical system, or do not know who has done the electrical work in your home in the past, ESA recommends you consult a licensed electrical contractor about your home's electrical requirements.

If you are hiring someone to do electrical work, ask:

- Do they hold a valid Electrical Contractor Licence? For a list of licensed electrical contractors, visit www.esasafe.com.
- Have they made arrangements for an Application for Inspection?





Escalator and Elevator Safety

Although escalators and elevators are extremely safe, practising proper riding behaviour will greatly reduce the chance of an accident. Make sure you know the facts.

Shop, But Watch Your Step

Winter weather doesn't stop us from hitting the nearest shopping centre or entertainment complex – nor does it stop the subway systems from being busy with daily commuters or airports buzzing with travellers waiting to escape the cold. That's why it's just as important to pay careful attention to escalators this time of year.

Statistically, escalators are safer than stairs, but when used inappropriately, the risk of being seriously injured increases.

Be sure to:

- Step on and off with care
- Hold onto the handrails
- Always face forward
- Stand in the middle of the step to avoid footwear – especially soft-soled ones like rubber boots – from rubbing against the sides
- Ensure shoelaces, loose clothing or extra-long coats or scarves do not get caught along the sides or stair grooves
- When travelling with a stroller or mobility device, use an elevator where available

Myth: The steps will flatten out and all the people will slide down.

Truth: This is impossible. Each step is a full triangular structure consisting of tread and riser supported on a track and cannot flatten out.

Myth: Escalators move too fast.

Truth: Escalators move at only two times walking speed. The misconception is probably due to the visual perception.

Myth: Escalators will stop and restart themselves.

Truth: Escalators only stop if the STOP button is pushed, the safety switch is tripped or an obstruction is encountered. Escalators can only be restarted by a trained professional.

Myth: If an escalator is not in motion, it is just a set of stairs.

Truth: Not at all! Escalator steps are not the correct height for normal walking and should not be used in that manner. The risk of tripping and falling is greatly increased.

The Inside Scoop on Elevator Rescue

The safest place to be when an elevator stops or if the doors won't open and you are trapped – is inside! An elevator is designed with every possible safety feature in mind.

Remain calm and carry on – an elevator is designed with every possible safety feature in mind



- If the doors won't open and you're stuck between floors, never force the doors open or try to exit; doing so could expose you to serious danger
- Stay inside and signal for help
- You can ring the alarm, or if an emergency phone or "HELP" button is provided, use it for immediate two-way communication to qualified, responsive staff 24-hours a day or to be directed within a 30-second timeframe
- Remain calm and know that help is on the way
- A professional recognized by the Technical Standards and Safety Authority (TSSA) – who is trained to specific rescue standards – will get you safely out of the elevator; such trained specialists know how to safely remove passengers or restart the elevator

Following these safe design and rescue procedures is the surest way to safety.

SO IN THE END, WHERE'S THE SAFEST PLACE TO BE?

> INSIDE THE ELEVATOR!

The Ups and Downs of Elevator Safety

Watch your step

Elevator floors are not always level. Levelling will change depending on the age of the elevator and its varying speeds. If the level is beyond an inch and half, alert the building owner or representative and TSSA.

Use the button

If you want to hold the door open, never stick your hand in the door. The outer doors are there to protect you from two inner doors, not to detect your hand, arm, leg or head.

Respect passenger and weight restrictions

Pay attention to the maximum number of passengers and weight restrictions posted in the elevator car. They exist for a very valid reason: the safety of all within.

Use alarm button for emergencies

Never try to pry the doors open with your hands if trapped inside the elevator. Ring the alarm button or use the emergency phone to call for help.



In the event of a fire, use the stairs and follow building emergency procedures. Though modern elevating equipment is made of fire-resistant materials, elevators should not be used unless under the direct supervision of professional firefighters.



Helping you stay safe

The Technical Standards and Safety Authority (TSSA) is an innovative, not-for-profit organization dedicated to enhancing public safety. Throughout Ontario, TSSA regulates the safety of: amusement devices; elevators and escalators; ski lifts; fuels; boilers and pressure vessels; operating engineers; and upholstered and stuffed articles. TSSA is there with you each time you get your home furnace inspected, your gas fireplace maintained, and even when you ride an elevator or escalator.



Toll-free: (outside Toronto) 1-877-682-8772

Email: customerservices@tssa.org

Corporate Website: tssa.org

Public Safety Website: safetyinfo.ca

PUTTING PUBLIC SAFETY FIRST - ALWAYS.