

HOMESAFETYMATTERS

WINTER 2023-24

FIND IT FIX IT PROGRAM CAN CAPTURE ACTIONS THAT IMPROVE SAFETY AT HOME

Submit yours and continue safety awareness around the house

Nearly 36 million people — roughly 1 in 9 people in the U.S. — experienced a medically consulted injury at home, according to the National Safety Council. That number is greater than the total number of medically consulted injuries that occur in public places, the workplace, and motor-vehicle crashes combined.

It's one reason why both RLI and GEM are re-emphasizing that their respective Find It, Fix It programs also include actions that improve safety around the house.

“Awareness of safety issues doesn't stop when you leave the work site,” said RLI Health and Safety Director **Mark Hoffman**. “There are plenty of ways to improve safety as you go about your home maintenance and improvement tasks. We want our associates to share them so others benefit.”

“There are no shortcuts in safety,

whether at work or at home,” said Safety and Field Operations Director **Bill Cornett**.

So, what's a Home FIFI? Maybe you:

- Installed a childproof lock on the cabinet where you store chemicals such as cleaners and polish.
- Rented a manlift to paint the house rather than use a ladder.
- Offered your neighbor your large ladder when you saw him cleaning the gutters while on the top rung of a smaller ladder.
- Put a jar of disposable earplugs next to the leaf blower and trimmer.
- Placed a bucket of ice melt by the front door to keep the walkway clear for the package delivery drivers all winter long.
- Rented a manlift to paint the house rather than use a ladder.

Having disposable earplugs readily available can save your hearing while using a



A high-visibility vest or jacket and a flashlight can make the difference in being seen while walking the dog.

- Stopped work on a home improvement project to clean up more frequently to keep the work area clear.

Submit Home FIFIs just like workplace FIFIs. Use the QR code at right to be directed to the form on the RLG Health and Safety app or use the form on either company's intranet and help keep everyone safe everywhere.



WINTER DANGER: HYPOTHERMIA CAN BE FATAL IF LEFT UNTREATED

Get help quick for people showing signs and symptoms

Skiing, sledding, going for a walk or other winter activities can be fun and invigorating.

But being outdoors in winter brings its own challenges. Hypothermia is a medical emergency that occurs when your body loses heat faster than it can produce heat, causing a dangerously low body temperature.

Hypothermia occurs as your body temperature falls below 95 degrees.

According to the Mayo Clinic, when your body temperature drops, your nervous system, heart and other organs are unable to work normally. Left untreated, hypothermia can lead to complete failure of your heart and respiratory system and eventually to death.

Signs and symptoms of hypothermia:

- Shivering.
- Slurred speech or mumbling.
- Slow, shallow breathing.
- Clumsiness or lack of coordination.
- Drowsiness or very low energy.

- Confusion or memory loss.
- Bright red, cold skin (in infants).

When to see a doctor:

Call 911 or your local emergency number if you suspect someone has hypothermia.

While you wait for help, gently move the person inside if possible. Jarring movements can trigger dangerous irregular heartbeats. Carefully remove his or her wet clothing, replacing it with warm, dry coats or blankets.



RUDOLPH LIBBE INC
GEM INC
GEM ENERGY
RUDOLPH LIBBE PROPERTIES

SEASONAL AFFECTIVE DISORDER

Serious changes in mood, behavior require professional help

Many people experience the “winter blues” when sunlight is at a premium and the weather in the Midwest is more suited to indoor activity.

Serious mood changes brought on by winter that affect how a person feels, thinks and behaves are more than simply “feeling down,” according to the National Institute of Mental Health.

Seasonal Affective Disorder is a type of depression characterized by a recurrent seasonal pattern, with symptoms lasting about four to five months of the year. While some people suffer from SAD in the summer months, winter-pattern SAD is far more common. In addition to the usual signs of depression, those suffering from winter-pattern SAD also have these symptoms:

- Oversleeping (hypersomnia).
- Overeating, particularly with a craving for carbohydrates, leading to weight gain.

GET WHERE YOU ARE GOING SAFELY

Snow, sleet or ice? Driving in winter often not nice

Whether it’s snow, sleet or ice, winter weather can cause extremely dangerous road conditions.

In 2021 there were 39,508 fatal crashes, and an estimated 22,325 injury crashes that occurred when there was snow, sleet or icy conditions, according to the U.S. National Highway Transportation Safety Administration.

Being prepared for what Old Man Winter throws at you is key.

Slow down: It’s harder to control your vehicle on a slick or snow-covered surface.

Increase your following distance: You will need more time to stop.

Don’t crowd the plow: Plows travel slowly, make wide turns and stop often, overlap lanes and exit the road frequently.

What to do in an emergency: If stopped

If you or someone you know is struggling or having thoughts of suicide, call or text the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline at 988 or chat at 988lifeline.org. In life-threatening situations, call 911.

- Social withdrawal (feeling like “hibernating”).

Studies indicate people with SAD have reduced levels of the brain chemical serotonin, which helps regulate mood. Research also suggests that sunlight affects the levels of molecules that help maintain normal serotonin levels.

Winter-pattern SAD treatment falls into four categories and may be used alone or in combination:

- Light therapy.
- Psychotherapy.
- Antidepressant medication.
- Vitamin D.



Light therapy is a mainstay for SAD treatment. Patients sit in front of a very bright light box for 30-45 minutes, usually first thing in the morning to make up for the diminished natural sunlight.

Psychotherapy (also called “talk therapy”) helps people by teaching them new ways of thinking, behaving and how to change habits that contribute to depression.

Many people with winter-pattern SAD have vitamin D deficiency. However, studies on the effectiveness of vitamin D to treat SAD are inconclusive.

As with any mental health issue, it is helpful to discuss symptoms and a personal treatment plan with a health care provider.



Increase your following distance when driving in snow, sleet and ice.

or stalled in wintry weather, keep your focus on yourself and your passengers, your vehicle and your surroundings:

- Stay with your car and don’t overexert yourself.
- Let your car be seen. Put bright markers on the antenna or windows and keep the interior dome light on.
- Be mindful of carbon monoxide poisoning. Make sure your exhaust pipe is clear of any snow and run your car only sporadically — just long enough to stay warm. Do not run your car for long periods of time in an enclosed space.

KEEP YOUR HANDS OUT

Snowblower injuries often occur when trying to clear machine

In 2021, there were over 4,200 snowblower-related injuries treated in U.S. emergency rooms with over 40 percent of those injuries to the wrist, hand and finger, according to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission.

The cause in most of these cases is when the operator tries to unclog wet snow and debris from the machine with their hand while it is running. Not getting your hand caught in the machinery is as easy as turning it off and using a cleanout tool or a long stick to unclog it.

It’s also a good idea to keep children far away from the work area so they don’t get hit by anything forcefully exiting the discharge chute.

Also, never operate the machine in an enclosed area, such as a garage.