

NEWS RELEASE



Southern Platte Fire Protection District
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Fire District Wants You to Take Care of Your Heart When Snow Shoveling

Parkville, MO (February 3, 2014) – As much of the Midwest gears up for a major snowfall this week, Southern Platte Fire District is urging people, particularly those with known heart disease, to take caution when removing snow.

“Shoveling snow is a very strenuous physical activity that puts a high degree of stress on the heart and its circulation,” states Division Chief David Rierson “It can have an effect on both the heart rate and blood pressure. This activity for citizens with risk factors for heart disease may be putting themselves at risk for very serious heart issues including heart attacks.”

The Fire District urges its citizens to understand their risks for heart disease prior to undertaking snow shoveling. Well-known risk factors for heart disease include smoking, being over the age of 50, diabetes, hypertension, elevated cholesterol, and a family history of heart disease. Being relatively inactive or obese are also factors that may further add to their risk of heart disease. People with risk factors should discuss with their physician prior to snow shoveling. If medical clearance is given, consider the following precautions:

- **Dress appropriately.** Light, layered, water-repellent clothing provides both ventilation and insulation. It is also important to wear the appropriate head coverings, as well as mittens or gloves and thick, warm socks. Take a break if you feel yourself getting too hot or too cold.
- **See what you are shoveling/snow blowing.** Make sure that your hat or scarf does not block your vision. Watch for ice patches and uneven surfaces. Avoid falls by wearing shoes or boots that have slip-resistant soles.

- **Clear snow early and often.** Begin when a light covering of snow is on the ground to avoid trying to clear packed, heavy snow.

When shoveling:

- **Warm up your muscles.** Shoveling can be a vigorous activity. Before you begin, warm up your muscles for 10 minutes with light exercise.
- **Pace yourself.** Take frequent breaks and replenish fluids to prevent dehydration. If you experience chest pain, shortness of breath or other signs of a heart attack, seek emergency care.
- **Use a shovel that is comfortable for your height and strength.** Do not use a shovel that is too heavy or too long for you. Consider buying a shovel that is specially designed to prevent too much stooping. Space your hands on the tool grip to increase your leverage.
- **When possible, push the snow instead of lifting it.** If you must lift, take small amounts of snow, and lift it with your legs: Squat with your legs apart, knees bent and back straight. Lift by straightening your legs, without bending at the waist. Then walk to where you want to dump the snow; holding a shovelful of snow with your arms outstretched puts too much weight on your spine.
- **Do not throw the snow over your shoulder or to the side.** This requires a twisting motion that stresses your back.

When snow blowing:

- **Never stick your hands or feet in the snow blower.** If snow becomes too impacted, stop the engine and wait at least five seconds. Use a solid object to clear wet snow or debris from the chute. Beware of the recoil of the motor and blades after the machine has been turned off.
- **Do not leave the snow blower unattended when it is running.** Shut off the engine if you must walk away from the machine.
- **Watch the snow blower cord.** If you are operating an electric snow blower, be aware of where the power cord is at all times, so you do not trip and fall.
- **Add fuel before starting the snow blower.** Never add fuel when the engine is running or hot. Do not operate the machine in an enclosed area.
- **Read the instruction manual.** Prior to using a snow blower, read the instruction manual for specific safety hazards, unfamiliar features, and whenever attempting to repair or maintain the snow blower

Visit http://www.nsc.org/news_resources/Resources/Documents/Snow_Shoveling.pdf for more tips on snow shoveling safety

The Southern Platte Fire Protection District's four stations provide fire suppression, inspections, emergency medical assistance, hazardous-materials response, and public education for more than 37,000 citizens in Platte County, MO. The Southern Platte Fire Protection District, which includes Parkville, Weatherby Lake, and Farley, is in one of the fastest-growing areas in the Kansas City metropolitan area. In addition to serving its own District, the department provides automatic-aid assistance to the Kansas City Fire Department and Riverside Public Safety.

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