

Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Give the Gift of Safety

Coldwater, MI. Not sure what to get that hard-to-buy-for loved one for Christmas? It's not too late to get creative! Follow this guide to piece together an emergency kit for your Secret Santa, and while you are at it, buy an extra one for yourself. According to Steve Todd, Health Officer of the Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency, "Bad weather is upon us and it never hurts to be prepared in case of an accident or a spin-out on icy roads." Don't let icy roads, heavy snowfall and blistering cold temperatures keep you from attending your holiday parties, just drive cautiously and give the gift of safety with these few things:

1. **New windshield wipers and washer solvent.** When snow and ice build-up on the windshields, wiper blades get heavily abused. Start the winter season with new blades. They will help ensure clearer vision when the snow flies. Also, make sure the washer solvent is filled with a fluid that won't freeze so that the windshield can stay clear of slush and mud.
2. **Food and water.** Having a water bottle and an emergency stash of granola bars and crackers will help ease the wait for a tow truck or rescue vehicle. Always give non-perishable food items that can be left in a car with a far-off expiration date, such as granola bars, nuts, fruit bars, chips, crackers, protein bars, etc. Refrain from giving bottled water, however, as the bottles can freeze in the cold

and break. Instead think about purchasing a refillable, BPA free cup or glass which can be filled at the beginning of the trip and reused throughout.

3. **Blankets.** Having extra blankets for the car is always a good idea. The warmth provided by adding just one extra layer of material will help keep the body's heat in and the cold out when temperatures dip below freezing.
4. **Boots, Gloves and a Hat.** These items might clash with the outfit, but having a pair of insulated boots, heavy gloves and a warm hat to put on can save toes, fingers and ears.
5. **Gas and Cash.** When a vehicle idles in the winter it may expend more fuel than during other times of the year. An empty fuel tank means a cold wait for help. For this reason, it's important to keep the tank at least half filled at all times. Think about adding a small gas can and/or a gas card to your kit so that if you do run out of gas, you can get the fuel you need.
6. **Cell Phone Car Charger.** Keep a cell phone car charger in a vehicle; even if the phone battery dies, it can use the energy from the car battery to make an emergency call. All cell phones will dial 9-1-1 free of charge. Also, think about including the business cards of local tow services to the kit (or adding these contacts to the cell phone contact list). Getting help fast is the goal.
7. **Jumper Cables or Portable Battery Booster.** Cold weather can cause your car battery to go dead. Think about including jumper cables or a portable battery booster to the kit to make sure that a dead battery never leaves you or your loved one stranded.
8. **Emergency Flares and a Flashlight.** Skidding off the road into a ditch or a snow bank or breaking down on an expressway curve in a dark area can be frightening. Emergency flares and/or flashlights will help you see what is going on, as well as help oncoming traffic know you are there and in trouble.
9. **First Aid Kit.** Having access to a first aid kit in the car is an important safety item. Whether you are bandaging a cut you've gotten from hitting your head on a dashboard or needing headache medicine, being prepared and knowing what to do is what safety is all about.

These nine items can serve as the foundation for an emergency kit that can help to assure safer winter travels, as well as provide much needed peace of mind.

For further information on winter safety issues, please visit the Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency's web site at: www.bhsj.org or stop in at one of our three locations:

Branch County
570 N. Marshall Rd.
Coldwater, MI 49036
(517) 279-9561

Hillsdale County
20 Care Drive
Hillsdale, MI 49242
(517) 437-7395

Three Rivers
1110 Hill St.
Three Rivers, MI 49093
(269) 273-2161

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