

# WINTER

# SAFETY TIPS

By Ranger Brandy Hanusosky

**THE ONSET OF COLD WEATHER CAN TRANSFORM** the outdoors into a winter wonderland, full of opportunities for you to enjoy skiing, ice skating, sledding, ice fishing, snowshoeing and even shoveling snow. While these activities create lasting winter memories, they also have the potential for injury. Be sure to take proper safety precautions while enjoying winter activities.

- **Make a plan.** Always make sure that someone knows where you are. Inform a friend or relative if you are going out and when you plan to return.
- **Check the weather report.** Heed precautions and advisories. If weather warnings suggest a severe wind chill or extremely low temperatures, consider avoiding outdoor activities until the weather improves.
- **Wear the gear.** Avoid frostbite and hypothermia by dressing in loose, comfortable layers, wearing proper footwear and keeping your head, ears and hands covered.
- **Sled safe.** Don't sled in parking areas, roadways, rivers or lakes. Always ride sitting and facing forward (going down head first increases the chance of head and spinal injuries). Sledding equipment should be in good repair without sharp edges. Avoid "jumps" that send a rider airborne—the higher they fly, the harder they fall. The building of such "jumps" is a violation of Park Rule 5.1(e) and the offender can be cited. Watch for other sledders and walk up the side when returning to the top of the hill.
- **Supervise children.** Adult supervision is the best protection for children. Be sure to watch for signs of hypothermia or frostbite.
- **Avoid hazards.** Survey the area and identify the potential danger spots; deep snow can camouflage obstacles and water features. Be extremely cautious on ice!
- **Protect what counts.** Always wear your helmet and/or protective goggles when participating in winter activities like snowmobiling, skiing and skating.
- **Shovel smart.** Move around and stretch to warm up your muscles before shoveling. Pick the right shovel for you. A smaller blade will require you to lift less snow, putting less strain on your body. Begin shoveling slowly to avoid placing a sudden demand on your heart. Pace yourself and take breaks as needed. Protect your back from injury by lifting correctly and avoiding twisting movements.

- **Take a break.** During any extended outdoor winter activity, be sure to come inside for regular breaks and stay hydrated. Give yourself a chance to warm up every couple of hours with a cup of hot cocoa or other warm drink.
- **Alcohol and winter activities don't mix.** Stay sober while participating in any winter activities.
- **Limit winter travel.** If you must drive in snowy conditions, make sure your car is stocked with emergency equipment, the gas tank is at least half-full and be prepared to handle the slick road conditions. Keep all of your vehicle's windows, mirrors and lights clear of ice and snow. Good vision is a key to good driving.

