

Safety Advice

✘ The City of Edinburgh Council and Lothian and Borders Police are issuing advice to members of the public on how they can stay safe as the severe weather continues.

People are urged to take extra care when travelling around the city, by car or on foot, as black ice and frozen snow is making roads and footpaths treacherous.

Council property experts are also warning of the dangers of overhanging snow and ice on buildings.

Meanwhile, parks staff are flagging up the serious safety risk posed if people venture on to seemingly frozen ponds, reservoirs and canals, where the ice is of variable thickness and can be extremely unstable.

Walkers and skiers in the Pentlands – and even on Arthur’s Seat – are also being warned of the risk of avalanches.

Councillor Robert Aldridge, Environment Leader, said: “As the sub-zero temperatures and severe wintry conditions persist, it’s vital that people continue to take extreme care when going about their business, as well as looking out for the most vulnerable in our communities. Together with our partners, Lothian and Borders Police, we are providing as much advice as we can on how people can keep themselves and their properties safe.”

A Lothian and Borders Police spokesman said: “Lothian and Borders Police continue to advise motorists only to drive if absolutely essential during adverse weather.

“When embarking on a journey, drivers should ensure their cars are fit for travel and are suitably equipped for the conditions.

“Motorists should also be wary of road conditions and drive at

an appropriate speed.

“Continued updates and advice can be found on the Lothian and Borders Police website at www.lbp.police.uk ”

BUILDINGS / OVERHANGING SNOW and ICE – advice from the Council’s Property Conservation team:

Overhanging snow and ice, particularly on cast iron roans, poses a real safety risk both for buildings themselves and for pedestrians walking underneath. The Council’s property conservation experts have already responded to a number of extreme emergency cases in the past 24 hours where gutters have come down due to the weight of snow they’re carrying.

Property owners have a legal responsibility to make their properties safe. The Council is continuing to provide emergency help where we can, but given that resources are stretched, we are also strongly urging people to adopt a practical, common sense approach to this issue.

If possible, property owners should appoint a contractor or work with their neighbours to help remove the snow and/or ice, making sure the pavement is clear of pedestrians before they start the removal and ensuring that they look out for their own safety at all times. People should also seek advice from their insurer on how to tackle the problem.

FROZEN RESERVOIRS / PONDS – advice from Pentland Ranger Service

People should never venture out on to a frozen pond or reservoir as the ice is of varying thickness and could be extremely unstable. There is a high risk of an accident in the next few days. Ice has been forming on the Reservoirs in the Pentland Hills and there is a high risk of an accident occurring in the next few days should anyone be tempted onto the ice.

Because it has been shown that children are most at risk, the

Council has asked head teachers to alert all their pupils to the dangers of going onto frozen water. There have been three incidents in the Pentland Hills in the last ten years, one resulting in a fatality.

The following Emergency Action advice may be helpful (as recommended by the Royal Life Saving Society UK):

NEVER VENTURE ON TO FROZEN RESERVOIRS, NO MATTER HOW SAFE IT LOOKS

If you see someone fall through the ice:

1. Shout for assistance and call the emergency services.
2. Do not walk or crawl onto the ice to attempt a rescue.
3. Shout to the casualty to keep still.
4. Try and reach them from the bank using a rope, pole, a tree branch, clothing tied together or anything else which extends your reach.
5. When reaching from the bank lie down to avoid being pulled onto the ice.
6. If you can not reach them slide something that floats, like a rescue buoy.
7. If the casualty is too far away, do not attempt to rescue them. Wait for the emergency services while calming and reassuring them.

After the casualty has been removed from the ice:

1. Make sure the ambulance is on its way
2. Lay them flat, check breathing and pulse and begin resuscitation if necessary
3. Prevent them from getting colder by putting them in a

sleeping bag or covering them including their head, with blankets or spare clothing.

4. Get them under shelter out of the cold.

5. Do not remove any clothing until the casualty is in a warm place

6. Do not rub their skin, apply hot water or give an alcoholic drink.

7. Keep them wrapped up so that they warm up gradually.

If you fall through the ice:

1. Keep calm and call for help

2. If no help is available spread your arms across the surface of the ice.

3. If the ice is strong enough kick your legs and slide onto the ice.

4. Lie flat and pull yourself to the shore.

5. If the ice is very thin, break it in front of you and make your way to the shore.

6. If you cannot climb out, wait for help keeping as still as possible.

7. Once you are safe, go to hospital immediately for a check up.

AVALANCHE RISK – advice from CEC Outdoor Education specialist, Cliff Smith, a fully qualified mountaineering instructor (Yes that really is his real name)

There is a real avalanche risk to walkers and skiers in the Pentland Hills, with a lesser risk also facing Arthur's Seat. With up to 2m of snow lying in hollows just now, hill-users

must be aware and ensure they know the risks.

Cliff Smith, who runs avalanche awareness courses, said: "We're not saying people shouldn't continue to enjoy walking and ski-ing in the Pentlands, but they do need to be aware of the dangers of avalanche, particularly where snow layers are weak. Our advice is to avoid slopes which are most heavily loaded with snow, since the added weight from walkers or skiers could trigger an avalanche. There's a risk of avalanches even on Arthur's Seat – just a small slide of snow could take a walker off a ledge, so people really do need to keep their wits about them. If you're heading into the hills, remember some basic safety tips, such as:

- letting someone know where you're heading and roughly what time to expect you back
- dressing appropriately for the conditions
- checking the weather forecast before setting off."