



## Holiday Safety



Holiday safety is an issue that burns brightest from late November to mid-January, the time when families gather, parties are scheduled and travel spikes. By taking some basic precautions, you can ensure your whole family remains safe and injury-free throughout the season.

### Candles, Fireplaces and Greens

About 3,400 deaths were caused by fires, burns and other fire-related injuries in 2017, according to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA). December is the peak calendar time for home candle fires, with fires jumping 1.5 times the national monthly average. Christmas Eve, Christmas and New Year's Eve are the top three days for candle fires in America. According to the United States Fire Administration, this year alone candles will cause an estimated 15,600 residential fires (an average of 25 per day) and \$539 million in direct property damage. On average, 115 people die annually from home candle fires and another 903 are injured according to the NFPA.

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### Candles, Fireplaces, and Holiday Safety

- Keep live Christmas trees watered; a rough rule of thumb is that a typical tree might absorb a quart of water for each inch of its diameter. This means many stands need to be topped off daily.
- Never leave burning candles unattended or sleep in a room with a lit candle.
- Make sure candles are on stable surfaces. Don't burn candles near trees, curtains or any other flammable items.
- Don't burn trees, wreaths or wrapping paper in the fireplace.



### Avoid Decorating Hazards

- Decorate the tree with your kids and pets in mind; move ornaments that are breakable or have metal hooks toward the top.
- Always use the proper step ladder; don't stand on chairs or other furniture.
- Lights are among the best parts of holiday decorating; make sure there are no exposed or frayed wires, loose connections or broken sockets.
- Make sure paths are clear indoors so older adults do not trip on wrapping paper, decorations or toys.

## Holiday Safety (continued)

### Give Safely

We've all heard it's important when choosing toys for infants or small children to avoid small parts that can be pulled or broken off and might prove to be a choking hazard. Here are some additional gift-related safety tips you might not have heard about:



- Select gifts for older adults that are not heavy or awkward to handle.
- Be aware of dangers associated with lithium coin/button batteries; of particular concern is their ingestion.
- If you buy a bicycle for a child, buy a helmet too.
- For answers to toy safety questions, check out the Consumer Product Safety Commission. ([www.cpsc.gov/Business--Manufacturing/Business-Education/Toy-Safety](http://www.cpsc.gov/Business--Manufacturing/Business-Education/Toy-Safety))

### Holiday Travel Safety

Many people choose to travel during the holidays by automobile, with the highest fatality rate of any major form of transportation. In 2015, 355 people died on New Year's Day, 386 on Thanksgiving Day and 273 on Christmas Day, according to *Injury Facts 2017*. Alcohol-impaired fatalities represent about one-third of the totals.



- Use a designated driver to ensure guests make it home safely after a holiday party; alcohol, over-the-counter or illegal drugs all cause impairment.
- Make sure every person in the vehicle is properly buckled up no matter how long or short the distance being traveled.
- Put that cell phone away; distracted driving causes one-quarter of all crashes.
- Make sure the vehicle is properly maintained, and keep an emergency kit with you.
- Be prepared for heavy traffic, and possibly heavy snow.

Remember, when guests are staying in your home, make sure areas have night lights or easy-to-reach lamps in case they need to get up during the night. Review your home fire escape plan with visitors. Remember, whether you are visiting someone else's home or you have guests in your home, make sure all medications are kept up and away and out of sight from young children.

### Don't Give the Gift of Food Poisoning

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services provides some holiday food safety tips. Here are a few:

- Do not rinse raw meat and poultry before cooking
- Use a food thermometer to make sure meat is cooked to a safe temperature
- Refrigerate food within two hours
- Leftovers are safe for four days in the refrigerator
- Bring sauces, soups and gravies to a rolling boil when reheating
- When storing turkey, be sure to cut the leftovers in small pieces so it will chill quicker
- Wash your hands frequently when handling food



## National Influenza Vaccination Week (December 2<sup>nd</sup> through December 8<sup>th</sup>)



The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) established National Influenza Vaccination Week in 2005 to highlight the importance of continuing flu vaccination through the holiday season and beyond. Here are actions you can take to help you prevent the flu.

### Take time to get a flu vaccine.

- CDC recommends a yearly flu vaccine as the first and most important step in protecting against influenza and its potentially serious complications.
- While there are many different flu viruses, flu vaccines protect against the 3 or 4 viruses that research suggests will be most common. Flu vaccination can reduce flu illnesses, doctors' visits, and missed work and school due to flu, as well as prevent flu-related hospitalizations.
- Flu vaccination also has been shown to significantly reduce a child's risk of dying from influenza.
- Everyone 6 months of age and older should get a flu vaccine every year before flu activity begins in their community. CDC recommends getting vaccinated by the end of October.
- For the 2018-2019 flu season, CDC and its Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommend annual influenza vaccination for everyone 6 months and older with any licensed, age-appropriate flu vaccine
- Vaccination of high risk persons is especially important to decrease their risk of severe flu illness. People at high risk of serious flu complications include young children, pregnant women, people with chronic health conditions like asthma, diabetes or heart and lung disease and people 65 years and older.
- Vaccination also is important for health care workers, and other people who live with or care for high risk people to keep from spreading flu to them.
- Infants younger than 6 months are at high risk of serious flu illness, but are too young to be vaccinated. Studies have shown that flu vaccination of the mother during pregnancy can protect the baby after birth from flu infection for several months. People who live with or care for infants should be vaccinated.

Get the  
**FLU SHOT**  
not the flu!

### Take everyday preventive actions to stop the spread of germs.



- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- While sick, limit contact with others as much as possible to keep from infecting them.
- If you are sick with flu-like illness, CDC recommends that you stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone except to get medical care or for other necessities. (Your fever should be gone for 24 hours without the use of a fever-reducing medicine.)
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. After using a tissue, throw it in the trash and wash your hands.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces and objects that may be contaminated with germs like flu.

### Stop flu spreading...



## Snow Squalls – Dangerous for PA Drivers

In November we talked about winter weather safety, briefly mentioning a very dangerous phenomenon known as snow squalls. These may sound harmless, but snow squalls have resulted in numerous multi-car pile-ups on interstates across the Commonwealth. How harmful are snow squalls? ***In Pennsylvania, you are more likely to die while driving in a snow squall than from a tornado.*** A sobering fact, so let's take a deeper look at this weather danger.

### What are snow squalls and why are they dangerous?

Snow squalls are thin bands of snowfall which can briefly produce sudden white-out conditions. When squalls combine with sub-freezing roadway surfaces, they can quickly produce icy driving conditions. Often, drivers moving at top speed with sunny, dry conditions then slam right into a zero-visibility, zero-traction environment in a matter of seconds. There's no way to safely stop in a dangerous squall which is why cars and trucks often get into chain-reaction accidents.

### So, what can I do about traveling with snow squalls?

With tornadoes and flash floods, anyone in the path can be harmed. Snow squalls are only hazardous to drivers, which makes it tough to communicate these dangers. Research from the National Weather Service uses data from the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) to show that you are **60 percent more likely to get into an accident on a snow squall day**. So, your best bet is to avoid traveling on days when snow squalls are forecast. Forecasters can usually tell you days in which snow squalls are likely to occur.

### I must travel, are there Snow Squall alerts?

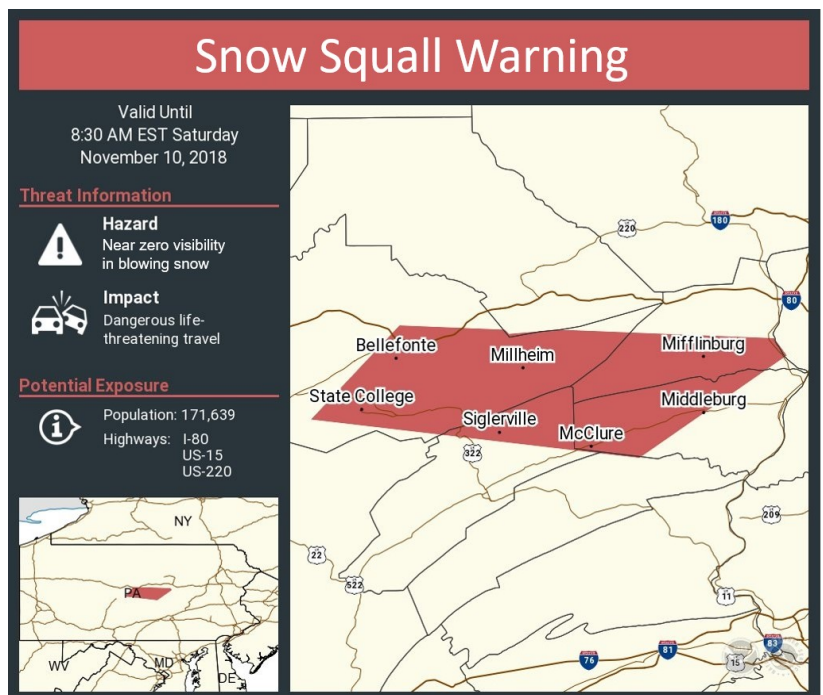
The National Weather Service has created a new **Snow Squall Warning** for the most dangerous squalls. You can sign up for these alerts through many of the same companies that offer tornado and flash flood warnings. You'll then receive snow squall warnings on your phone. You can also carry a portable weather radio in your car for a voice alert of the dangerous squalls.

### Once a Snow Squall Warning is issued:

1. Get off the road before you see the squall - the only safe place is completely off the highway
2. Find the nearest exit and locate a safe area to park
3. DO NOT park on the side of any roadway, as you may become part of an accident
4. Wait for the squall to pass before continuing your travel
5. Squalls typically pass within 30-60 minutes

Once you are caught in a squall, it's already too late. **Be safe and avoid or delay travelling on squall days!**

For further information on snow squalls, check out the National Weather Services web page at <https://www.weather.gov/safety/winter-snow-squall>



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EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

[www.pema.pa.gov](http://www.pema.pa.gov)

### Preparedness Events in December

#### National Influenza Vaccination Week

(<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/resource-center/nivw/index.htm>)

### Additional Resources

Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency: [www.pema.pa.gov](http://www.pema.pa.gov)

ReadyPA: [www.Ready.PA.gov](http://www.Ready.PA.gov)

SERVPA: [www.Serv.PA.gov](http://www.Serv.PA.gov)

Federal Emergency Management Agency: [www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov)

Office of the State Fire Commissioner: [www.osfc.pa.gov](http://www.osfc.pa.gov)

Pennsylvania Department of Human Services: [www.dhs.pa.gov](http://www.dhs.pa.gov)

Pennsylvania Department of Health: [www.health.pa.gov](http://www.health.pa.gov)

PA State Animal Response Team: [www.pasart.us](http://www.pasart.us)

PA Department of Transportation: [www.penndot.gov](http://www.penndot.gov)

PA511Connect: [www.511pa.com](http://www.511pa.com)

Pennsylvania State Police: [www.psp.pa.gov](http://www.psp.pa.gov)

# FLU PREVENTION TIPS

**GET VACCINATED** Influenza is the only respiratory virus preventable by vaccination.

**KEEP HANDS CLEAN**  
Wash hands with soap and water or use hand sanitizer often.

**STAY HOME** If you become ill, stay at home and avoid contact with others until your fever is gone for 24 hours without using fever-reducing medicine.

**COVER YOUR MOUTH AND NOSE**

Always cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue away after use and clean your hands.

Up to  
**20%**  
of the U.S.  
will get the flu.

**EXERCISE** It boosts your immune system and speeds recovery from illness.

**DON'T TOUCH YOUR FACE**

This is the easiest way for germs to get into your body.

**EAT HEALTHY** Eating healthy, balanced meals can strengthen your immune system.

**SMILE** Studies show that smiling can help boost your immune system.

# GET YOUR FLU SHOT

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