



R B F & R S

news release

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STAY SAFE IN SNOWY WEATHER CONDITIONS

With heavy snow forecast for Berkshire this evening, Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBF&RS) is reminding people to take extra care to stay safe both on the roads and at home.

Snow and ice make road conditions extremely hazardous, so drivers are advised to stay home in the warm rather than risk driving unless their journey is absolutely essential. If you do have to drive, follow this advice:

- Allow plenty of extra time for your journey and drive carefully and steadily.
- Remember to allow extra space when manoeuvring your vehicle in slippery conditions.
- Ensure your windscreen, rear screen and mirrors are clear and give other drivers plenty of room as well.
- Keep an emergency kit of warm clothes, a shovel, food and drink, and a fully charged mobile phone in the car in case you get stuck in the snow.

Many people will be spending more time indoors during the extreme weather conditions. You can reduce the risk of a fire starting in your home by following these tips:

- Ensure your chimney is swept and clear. Always use a fireguard with an open fire.
- Never leave candles unattended or on flammable surfaces.
- Switch off electrical appliances before you go out or go to bed (unless they are designed to stay on, such as a freezer).
- If you or anyone in your family smokes, make sure you extinguish cigarettes properly.
- Most house fires start in the kitchen – never leave cooking unattended.
- Never dry clothing over electric heaters, as they can catch fire easily.

It is also vital to keep away from frozen water (e.g. ponds and lakes) and to emphasise the dangers to children and young people. While the ice may look fun to play on and appear to be thick, it is often much thinner than it looks and it is very easy for people to get into difficulties. Dog walkers who attempt to save their pets are also putting their own lives at risk: if the ice isn't strong enough to support the weight of a dog, it will not support your weight either.

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Olaf Baars, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, said: “Members of the public can assist us and the other emergency services by not making routine car journeys while there is a large amount of snow and ice on the roads. You can also help us by only calling 999 if there is a risk to life, and following our advice to reduce the risk of an accidental fire starting in your home.

“Never play on frozen water or put yourself in danger by attempting to help a person or animal that has fallen through the ice. RBFRS has a specialist water rescue unit, which is operated by firefighters who are specially trained to deal with water incidents. If someone falls through the ice, do not try to go to their rescue – call 999 instead.”

RBFRS has placed its off-road capability vehicles across the county to assist with incidents where needed and these will also be used to support South Central Ambulance Service at life-critical incidents. RBFRS is also running its Operations Support Room, which will remain in place throughout the heavy snow conditions.

ENDS.