

SAFETY MATTERS

Safety and Loss Control Resource



- Holiday Decoration Safety
- Driving Safety
- Cold Weather Driving Safety
- Confined Space

Holiday Decoration Safety

Trees

Many artificial trees are fire resistant. If you buy one, look for a statement specifying this protection.

A fresh tree will stay green longer and be less of a fire hazard than a dry tree. To check for freshness, remember:

- * A fresh tree is green.
- * Fresh needles are hard to pull from branches.
- * When bent between your fingers, fresh needles do not break.
- * The trunk butt of a fresh tree is sticky with resin.
- * When the trunk of a tree is bounced on the ground, a shower of falling needles shows that tree is too dry.

Place tree away from fireplaces, radiators and other heat sources. Heated rooms dry trees out rapidly, creating fire hazards.

Cut off about two inches of the trunk to expose fresh wood for better water absorption. Trim away branches as necessary to set tree trunk in the base of a sturdy, water-holding stand with wide spread feet. Keep the stand filled with water while the tree is indoors.

Place the tree out of the way of traffic and do not block doorways. Use thin guy-wires to secure a large tree to walls or ceiling. These wires are almost invisible.

Lights

Indoors or outside, use only lights that have been tested for safety. Identify these by the label from an independent testing laboratory.

Check each set of lights, new or old, for broken or cracked sockets, frayed or bare wires, or loose connections. Discard damaged sets or repair them before using.

Fasten outdoor lights securely to trees, house, walls or other firm support to protect from wind damage.

Use no more than three standard-size sets of lights per single extension cord. Turn off all lights on trees and other decorations when you go to bed or leave the house. Lights could short and start a fire.

Never use electric lights on a metallic tree.

The tree can become charged with electricity from faulty lights, and any person touching a branch could be electrocuted! To avoid this danger, use colored spotlights above or beside a tree, never fastened onto it! attempt to drink liquid, which contains a hazardous chemical.

General Rules for Holiday Safety

- * Keep matches, lighters, and candles out of the reach of children.
- * Avoid smoking near flammable decorations.
- * Make an emergency plan to use if a fire breaks out anywhere in the home. See that each family member knows what to do. **PRACTICE THE PLAN!**
- * Avoid wearing loose flowing clothes— particularly long, open sleeves—near open flames - such as those of a fireplace, stove, or candlelit table.
- * Never burn candles near evergreens. Burning evergreens in the fireplace can also be hazardous. When dry, greens burn like tinder. Flames can flare out of control, and send sparks flying into a room, or up the chimney to ignite creosote deposits. Plan for safety. Remember, there is no substitute for common sense. Look for and eliminate potential danger spots near candles, fireplaces, trees, and/or electrical connections.

Candles

- * Never use lighted candles on a tree or near other evergreens.
 - * Always use non-flammable holders.
- * Keep candles away from other decorations and wrapping paper.
- * Place candles where they cannot be knocked down or blown over.

Paper

- * When making paper decorations, look for materials labeled non-combustible or flame-resistant.
- * Never place trimming near open flames or electrical connections.
- * Remove all wrapping papers from tree and fireplace areas immediately after presents are opened.
- * Do not burn papers in the fireplace. A flash fire may result as wrappings ignite suddenly and burn intensely.

Fires

- Before lighting any fire, remove all greens, boughs, papers, and other decorations from fireplace area. Check to see that flue is open.
- Keep a screen before the fireplace all the time a fire is burning.

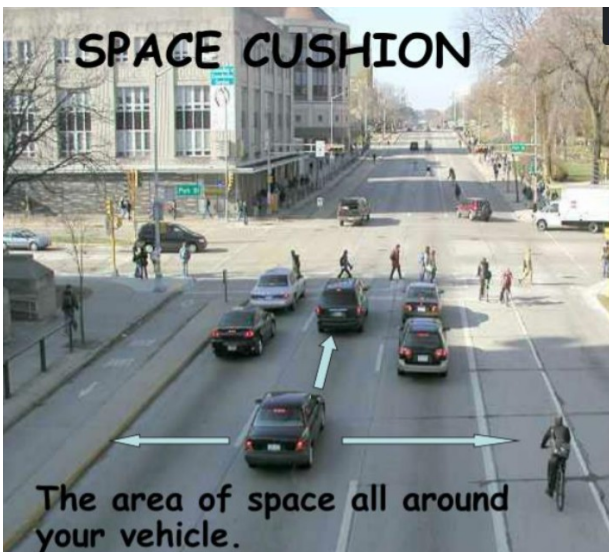
Driver Safety

This month's safety focus highlights a few essential practices: maintaining proper following distance, increasing awareness around pedestrians, staying alert in parking lots, and avoiding distractions. These reminders support our day to day lives.



Drive Safe: Protect Yourself & Others

As we move into the busy holiday season, many of us are traveling more often—visiting different county sites, attending end of year events, or navigating fuller parking lots and roadways. With more activity comes a greater need for awareness. Driving safe isn't just a requirement—it's part of how we protect one another and maintain trust with our community. Even small habits behind the wheel can prevent injuries, reduce risk, and ensure everyone gets home safely for their families during the holidays and beyond.



Speed and Space Management

Speeding remains a major factor in many crashes. Driving above the posted speed limit increases both your chance of being involved in a collision and the severity of the outcome. Higher speeds reduce your reaction time and make crashes more likely to result in serious injury or fatality.

SPACE CUSHION Excessive speed and following too closely are the two most common causes of vehicle crashes. You need both time and space to react safely to the actions of other drivers. Maintaining a proper safety cushion gives you room to respond to sudden stops, lane changes, or unexpected hazards.

- Passenger Car: Keep a 2-3 second space cushion.
- Larger or heavier Vehicles: keep 5-6 second space cushion.

POSTED SPEED LIMITS & ROAD CONDITIONS Follow posted speed limits, adjust for conditions, and stay alert for hazards. Expect the unexpected!!



PEDESTRIAN SAFETY

Always stay alert for pedestrians, especially in parking lots, near schools, building entrances, and crosswalks. Slow down, scan your surroundings, and yield the right of way every time.

PARKING LOT SAFETY

Use extra caution in parking lots where visibility is limited and pedestrian activity is high. Reduce speed, avoid distractions, and continuously scan for pedestrians or moving vehicles.

BACKING UP SAFETY

Backing incidents are highly preventable. Use pull-through parking when possible, complete a quick walk-around, and use a spotter when visibility is limited. Rely on mirrors and cameras, but always look over your shoulder to check blind zones before moving.

SCANNING MIRRORS

Scanning your mirrors regularly helps you maintain full awareness of your surroundings. Check them every few seconds and use brief shoulder checks as needed to ensure no hazards are approaching from blind spots. Want to level up your game? Take a minute to adjust your side mirrors using the National highway traffic Safety Association's ["Keeping an Eye on Blind Spots"](#) to learn how small tweaks can maximize your visibility and reduce blind spot risk.

Driver Safety

DISTRACTED DRIVING

Keep your attention on the road at all times. Avoid phone use, eating, multitasking, or anything that takes your eyes or focus away from driving.

MUSIC & AUDIO

Set music or audio before driving and keep the volume low enough to hear surrounding traffic.

DRIVER FATIGUE

Driver fatigue occurs when physical or mental exhaustion reduces a driver's ability to operate a vehicle safely. It can result from inadequate sleep, long work hours, demanding tasks, or other contributing factors that slow reaction time and impair judgment. Fatigue increases collision risk in both large and small vehicles alike. Staying rested, alert, and attentive is essential to supporting overall driver safety and keeping everyone on the road safe.

AGGRESSIVE DRIVING

Aggressive driving includes behaviors such as speeding, following too closely, or making abrupt lane changes, all of which reduce safety for everyone on the road. Staying calm behind the wheel and managing your emotions helps prevent these behaviors from occurring. By allowing extra time, keeping a safe distance, and responding thoughtfully rather than reactively, drivers can maintain a safer and more controlled driving environment.

SAFETY STARTS WITH YOU

By staying alert, prepared, and responsible, we help keep ourselves and others safe on the road. Thank you for doing your part to support a safer workplace and community.



Cold Weather Driving

Winter can be a beautiful season, but it also brings a range of challenging and unpredictable driving conditions to our roadways. There are many things you can do to ensure your Safety and that of those around you during this cold season.



Prepare Yourself for Winter Conditions

Winter weather can be unpredictable. Prepare for the worst by keeping an emergency kit in your vehicle. The following items can be extremely helpful if you become stranded during a storm:

FLASHLIGHT Bring a flashlight with extra batteries.

EXTRA SUPPLIES Pack warm blankets, additional clothing, water, and non-perishable snacks. If you experience a long delay, you'll be glad you have them.

CLEAN, DRY TOWEL Useful for drying your hands after installing snow chains or changing a spare tire in the rain.

Prepare Your Car for Winter Conditions

Here are some tips to help you ensure your vehicle is ready for the winter weather:

GENERAL INSPECTION Check the brakes, windshield wipers, exhaust system, and heater/defroster to ensure they are all functioning properly.

ANTIFREEZE Verify your radiator fluid level and add antifreeze/coolant as necessary.

WINDSHIELD WIPERS Replace worn wiper blades if needed. Using a winter-grade windshield washer fluid can help de-ice your windshield.

TIRES Ensure your tires are properly inflated and that the tread is in good condition.

CHAINS If you're heading into regions that may experience snow, always carry tire chains or an approved traction device. Make sure they are the correct size for your tires and in good working condition. Chains must be installed on the drive wheels, so know whether your vehicle is front- or rear-wheel drive.





Cold Weather Driving Tips

ALLOW ENOUGH TIME

Winter trips often take longer, especially when storms or icy roads are involved. Start early and plan extra time to reach your destination safely.

KEEP YOUR FUEL TANK FULL

Weather conditions may force you to change your route or turn back. Highway closures can also lead to long delays, so keep your tank full at all times.

SLOW DOWN & BUCKLE UP

Most winter collisions happen because drivers travel too fast for the conditions. Reduce your speed and always wear your seat belt. Use low gears to help slow your vehicle and avoid braking when possible. Remember, four-wheel and all-wheel drive improve traction for climbing, not stopping,

TURN OFF CRUISE CONTROL

Do not use cruise control on snowy or wet roads. Maintaining direct control of your vehicle allows you to react more quickly to sudden changes.

DON'T PANIC

If your vehicle begins to slide on ice or snow, ease off the accelerator, avoid braking, and steer in the direction you want to go. If braking is necessary, gently pump the brakes without locking them.

BLACK ICE

Ice can form even when temperatures are above freezing, especially below 40F and in windy conditions. Bridges, overpasses, and shaded areas are particularly dangerous. Drive with extreme caution.

BE OBSERVANT

Poor weather reduces visibility. Slow down and stay alert of other vehicles. Keep a safe distance behind vehicles in front of you.

KEEP WINDOWS CLEAR

Mud, slush, and snow from other vehicles can quickly block your view. Use your wipers and defroster regularly.

FOG

Reduce speed and use low-beam headlights or fog lights. High beams reflect off fog and snow, worsening visibility. Never stop in the roadway—if visibility becomes too poor to drive, pull off safely.

FLOODING

Avoid driving through deep water and find an alternate route. As little as 12 inches of moving water can sweep a vehicle off the road. If your engine stalls, attempting to restart it may cause severe damage. Watch for floating debris and remember to test your brakes afterward, as wet brakes lose effectiveness.

SLOW FOR THE CONE

Stay alert in work zones. Avoid using mobile devices, unnecessary lane changes, and crowding other drivers. Follow posted speed limits, merge when instructed, and remain patient. Always slow down for the cone zone.



CONFINED SPACE

WHAT IS A CONFINED SPACE?

A **confined space** is any area that is large enough for an employee to enter and perform work, has limited means of entry or exit, and is not designed for continuous occupancy.

Examples:



COMMON HAZARDS IN CONFINED SPACES

Confined spaces can contain hidden or rapidly changing hazards that may not be obvious at first glance. Common dangers include:

- ◆ **Oxygen Deficiency or Enrichment:** Low oxygen levels can cause unconsciousness or death; too much oxygen increases fire and explosion risks.
- ◆ **Toxic Atmospheres:** Gases such as hydrogen sulfide, carbon monoxide, or methane can accumulate undetected.
- ◆ **Flammable or Explosive Vapors:** Vapors from fuel, solvents, or decomposing materials can ignite.
- ◆ **Engulfment Hazards:** Loose materials like sand, grain, or wastewater sludge can trap or suffocate workers.
- ◆ **Physical Hazards:** Slips, falls, electrical hazards, poor lighting, or mechanical equipment movement.
- ◆ **Temperature Extremes:** Hot or cold environments can cause heat stress or hypothermia.
- ◆ **Limited Visibility and Communication:** Makes rescue and coordination more difficult.

TYPES OF CONFINED SPACES

Not all confined spaces present the same level of risk. Under Cal/OSHA Title 8, confined spaces are classified as:

- ◆ **Non-Permit Confined Space (NPCS):** Spaces that do *not* contain or have potential to contain serious hazards.
- ◆ **Permit-Required Confined Space (PRCS):** Spaces that contain—or have potential to contain—hazardous atmospheres, engulfment risks, or other serious safety hazards.
Examples:
 - ◆ **Permit-Required:** Sewers, tanks, silos, wells, utility vaults.
 - ◆ **Non-Permit:** Crawl spaces, equipment pits, or large HVAC ducts with no atmospheric hazard.

REQUIRED SIGNAGE:



REQUIRED PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)

The type of PPE depends on the hazards identified during the pre-entry assessment. Common PPE

Includes:

Basic Required PPE:

- ◆ Hard hat (protects from falling or bumping hazards)
- ◆ Safety glasses or face shield
- ◆ Gloves suitable for the task (chemical-resistant, cut-resistant, or insulated)
- ◆ Steel-toe or slip-resistant boots
- ◆ High-visibility vest (especially in traffic or open-area entries)

Atmospheric & Respiratory Protection:

- ◆ Air-purifying respirator (APR) with appropriate cartridges — **only if air is tested safe**
- ◆ Supplied-air respirator (SAR) or **self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA)** for IDLH atmospheres
- ◆ Portable gas detector (oxygen, LEL, CO, H2S minimum)

Additional PPE as Needed:

- ◆ Hearing protection (earplugs or earmuffs) in high-noise areas
- ◆ Chemical-resistant suit or Tyvek coveralls
- ◆ Fall protection harness with lifeline when vertical entry is required.

ESSENTIAL EQUIPMENT FOR CONFINED SPACE ENTRY

Entry & Access Equipment:

- ◆ **Tripod with winch or davit arm** – for vertical entry/exit.
- ◆ **Winch or retrieval system** – to safely raise and lower personnel.
- ◆ **Entry ladder or platform** – for safe access and egress.

Atmospheric Monitoring Equipment:

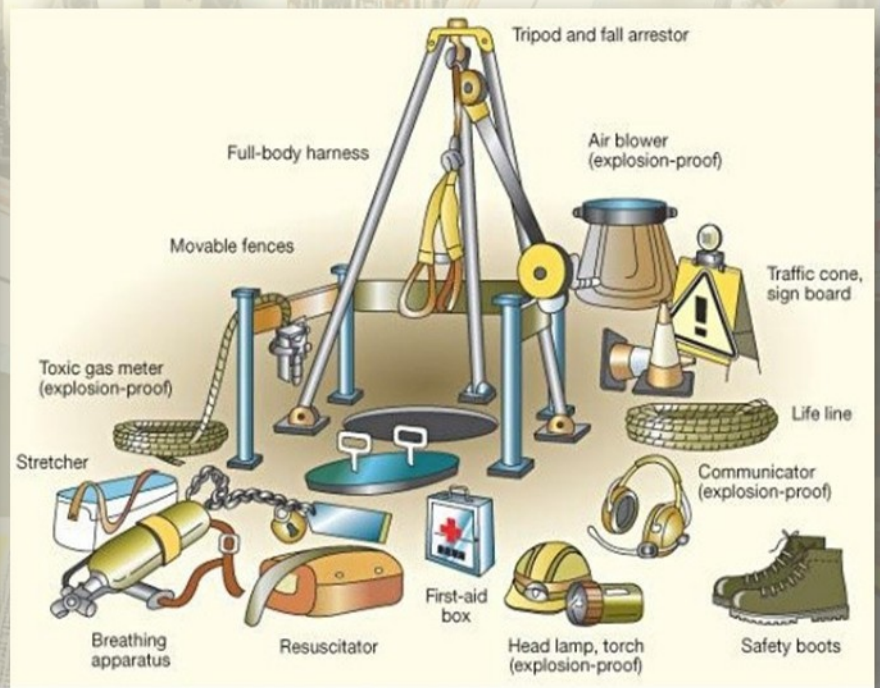
- ◆ **Portable gas detectors** – monitor oxygen (O), combustible gases (LEL), carbon monoxide (CO), hydrogen sulfide (H2S), and other relevant toxic gases.
- ◆ **Continuous air monitoring devices** – optional for longer entries.
- ◆ **Calibration kit** – to ensure gas detectors are accurate.

Communication Equipment:

- ◆ **Two-way radios or intercom** – for contact between entrant and attendant.
- ◆ **Whistle or signaling device** – backup communication in case of failure.

Rescue & Emergency Equipment:

- ◆ **Rescue tripod or davit system** – for lifting personnel in emergencies.
- ◆ **Rescue harnesses & lifelines** – compatible with the retrieval system.
- ◆ **First-aid kit & emergency oxygen** – for immediate medical response.
- ◆ **Confined space rescue plan documentation** – readily accessible on-site.



REGULATORY COMPLIANCE

- ◆ Confined space work is strictly regulated to protect employee safety. Under **Cal/OSHA Title 8, Sections 5156–5158**, employers must:
- ◆ Classify confined spaces as Permit-Required or Non-Permit based on hazard potential.
- ◆ Ensure proper entry permits are completed for high-risk spaces.
- ◆ Follow requirements for training, PPE, equipment, and rescue procedures.
- ◆ Compliance with these regulations not only ensures legal adherence but also significantly reduces the risk of injury or fatality.

TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

- ◆ All employees who work in or around confined spaces must receive proper training. Training should cover:
- ◆ Identification and recognition of confined space hazards
- ◆ Proper use of personal protective equipment (PPE)
- ◆ Atmospheric testing and monitoring procedures
- ◆ Rescue and emergency procedures
- ◆ Refresher training is recommended periodically to maintain awareness, skills, and compliance.



RESCUE PROCEDURES

Confined space rescue is critical and must be preplanned:

- ◆ Rescue teams must be on standby for every confined space entry.
- ◆ Regular rescue drills ensure personnel are familiar with retrieval systems and emergency protocols.
- ◆ Rescue equipment, including harnesses, tripods, davit arms, and emergency oxygen, must be inspected and ready for immediate use.
- ◆ A written rescue plan should be accessible on-site at all times.

ENTRY AUTHORIZATION

Only trained and authorized personnel may enter confined spaces. Key points include:

- ◆ A valid confined space entry permit must be completed and approved prior to entry.
- ◆ Permits ensure that all hazards are identified, assessed, and controlled before work begins.
- ◆ Unauthorized entry is strictly prohibited and

CONFINED SPACE ENTRY PROCEDURE

Roles and Responsibilities

- ◆ Entrant
- ◆ Attendant
- ◆ Entry Supervisor
- ◆ Rescue Team

Safety Measures

- ◆ Permit-to-Work System
- ◆ Continuous Monitoring
- ◆ Communication Systems
- ◆ Training and Drills
- ◆ Signage and Barricading



PREVENTIVE TIPS / BEST PRACTICES

To minimize risks during confined space work:

- ◆ Always test the atmosphere prior to entry and continuously monitor while inside.
- ◆ Never enter a confined space alone; maintain constant communication with an attendant.
- ◆ Inspect all PPE and equipment before each use.
- ◆ Ensure ventilation is adequate to reduce exposure to toxic or flammable atmospheres.
- ◆ Keep emergency contacts and rescue plans readily accessible.
- ◆ Conduct regular drills to ensure readiness in case of emergency.

QUICK FACTS / SAFETY IMPACT

- ◆ Confined spaces account for a significant number of workplace injuries and fatalities each year.
- ◆ Most incidents result from lack of training, poor communication, or inadequate monitoring.
- ◆ Adherence to proper procedures, use of PPE, and preplanning can prevent nearly all confined space accidents.

Have you identified any new confined spaces within your department? If so, please contact the Safety Loss Control Division at Safetydivision@rivco.org, or (951) 955-3520. We are happy to assist you further!