

WEATHER, SAFETY AND OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

WINTER SAFETY TIPS

The weather in Newfoundland and Labrador can be quite different and can change often, so it is important to be aware of the changing weather conditions and to be prepared, with safety in mind. Some summer months such as July and August can be hot and humid, often indicated by a humidex, whereas in the winter, between lower temperatures and wind there is a wind-chill. December to March are the coldest months with the most severe cold weather that can include snow, sleet, and even rain. Wind is a factor at any time of year.

The best way to make the most of the outdoors is to have knowledge on what to expect and how to prepare. This document will explain why it is important to keep safety in mind during the winter season, plus provide advice and information on preparing for weather and snowy, slippery conditions for winter activities.

Daylight Saving Time

[Daylight Saving Time](#) (DST) is a practice of setting the clock forward by one hour during the summer months and back again in the fall, in order to make better use of natural daylight. In 2024, DST will start on **Sunday, March 10, 2024** at 2 a.m. local time, when the clocks were set forward by one hour. DST will end on **Sunday, November 3, 2024** at 2 a.m. local time, when the clocks will be set back by one hour. This means that it will start to get dark earlier in the day, beginning around 4:30. When walking at night, to ensure your visibility to vehicles, you can wear a reflective strip on your coat and/or knapsack or book bag. You can find these reflective strips at many local stores, such as Walmart, Dollarama and Canadian Tire (links to store websites can be found below).

Winter Safety Tips

Winter can bring snow, ice, colder temperatures and less daylight hours, which can increase the risk of injuries, in terms of outdoor activities. In addition to ice and snow, you will experience slush or sleet. Here are some things you should be aware of:

Commuting:

- Plan ahead. Take your time when walking or driving in icy conditions in order to avoid slips and falls. Ice, or “black ice” as it is often called, can be camouflaged with the pavement and is especially difficult to see at night. By wearing the proper footwear (e.g. winter boots, adding “ice cleats” to your shoes/boots), you can decrease the chance of slips and falls.
- Check the weather before going outside! Conditions can change quickly and snow or ice storms can create unsafe walking/travel conditions. Here is the link to the Environment Canada site for St. John’s weather that is updated daily or more often, if needed: [St. John's Weather](#).
- Plan your route ahead and ensure you have access to transportation for the way home (i.e. check the last bus runs, etc.).
- Avoid walking with headphones in or while you are on the phone so that you can focus on where you are stepping. Stay safe near traffic and remain cautious of other pedestrians. Walk or travel in groups where possible.
- After a snowfall it will take a day or two for the sidewalks to be cleared, so this can impact your commute to a bus stop, or walking to school, or even around campus. Streets may also be snow-covered for a few

days. This is a concern if you are driving. Here is the link to safe driving in Canada in winter: [Winter Driving](#).

Clothing:

- Dress warmly when outside. Even if it is sunny, the wind can make it feel much colder, and if you are walking or waiting for a bus, staying warm is critical. Wearing layers is the best way to do this. The following link provides more details about how to dress in layers: [Dressing in Layers](#). Here are some suggestions and tips on what to wear:
 - A base layer that keeps your skin dry/removes moisture,
 - Middle layer that keeps you warm,
 - Outer layer that protects you from the elements (wind and rain (wet snow))
- Wear proper footwear designed for slippery, wet and cold conditions. Look for boots that are insulated, have traction to grip better on icy surfaces, and at some height for when you have to walk through snow.
- An option for extra grip on your shoes is to purchase ice cleats. [Ice cleats](#) are a winter footwear attachment that can be attached to any boots to provide extra grip on icy surfaces.
- A winter coat is an important and necessary investment. When looking at coats, look for warmth, length, something that is windproof and water resistant. Having a coat with a hood is good for keeping your head warm and dry, especially when it's windy and snowy. The coat should not be fitted but leave extra room for layers underneath (see details about layers above).
- Hats, earmuffs, scarves, gloves, mittens, and snow pants are all necessary to be comfortable and warm in winter. A hat should be fitted and cover your head and ears.
- For children *it is very important* that in addition to warm clothing like snow pants, hats and mittens, they really need to have waterproof boots to keep their feet dry. If you have a toddler and use a stroller to get around, this can get harder if the sidewalks or roads are snow covered.

Where to buy winter clothing in St. John's:

- Canadian Tire <https://www.canadiantire.ca/en/>
- Mark's <https://www.marks.com/en.html>
- Mountain Warehouse <https://www.mountainwarehouse.com/ca/>
- Roots <https://www.roots.com/ca/en/>
- Sport Chek <https://www.sportchek.ca/>
- Value Village <https://stores.savers.com/>
- Salvation Army Thrift Store [Shop & Donate Pre-Loved Goods - The Salvation Army Thrift Store](#)
- The Neighbourhood <https://myneighbourhoodnl.com/>
- Thrift stores <https://www.google.com/search>
- Walmart <https://www.walmart.ca/>
- Winners <https://www.winners.ca/en>

Communications:

- Letting friends, family or roommates know when you head out and when you are expected back (especially after dark) is very important - stay in contact if your plans change.
- If on campus, download and use the MUNSafE App: <https://www.mun.ca/emergency/be-prepared/>
 - You can use *Friend Walk* to send your location to a friend so they can watch you walk to your destination in real-time. They can activate emergency services if necessary.

- In the event of an emergency or if you are feeling unsafe, you can trigger a Mobile BlueLight to send your location to Campus Enforcement and Patrol (CEP) and dispatch an officer.

In the event of upcoming bad weather, any time of the year:

Winter weather in Newfoundland & Labrador can change quickly, and there could be snowfall or wind warning (often referred to as “Winter Storm Watch” or “Snowfall Warning”). Summer weather in Newfoundland & Labrador can also sometimes change quickly. There could be high winds with rain, thunderstorms or occasionally harsh conditions from weather events such as hurricanes.

- In the event of a storm or snowfall warning, ensure you have enough food, water and necessary items for 72 hours/3 days, in case of power outages.
- Remember to charge your phones and devices, and have emergency lights (flashlight, electric candle) on hand, if needed.
- Updates about potential closures or delayed openings of the university due to weather are always shared on the MUNSafe app: <https://www.mun.ca/emergency/Preparedness/>
- Updates about children’s school closures or a delayed opening due to weather are on this site: <https://www.nlesd.ca/schools/statusreport.jsp>
- Information about Emergency Preparedness checklist can be found here: <https://www.getprepared.gc.ca/index-eng.aspx>
- Updates about changes to Metrobus schedules can be found here: <https://www.metrobus.com/home/>
- For updates on events and news happening in the community check out Local News at:
 - <https://vocm.com/>
 - <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/newfoundland-labrador>.

Home preparations for winter:

Below are a few tips when living off campus (house or apartment) when you may have snow clearing responsibilities:

- Buy a shovel and have it nearby during winter months. If possible, have a shovel inside should the snow build up against the door and you need to dig yourself out. Here are a few places where you can buy a shovel:
 - Canadian Tire <https://www.canadiantire.ca/en/>
 - Home Hardware <https://www.homehardware.ca/en/>
 - Kent <https://kent.ca/en/>
 - The Home Depot <https://www.homedepot.ca/en/>
 - Walmart <https://www.walmart.ca/>
- Purchase rock salt to spread on walkways and driveways. Rock salt melts ice in order to prevent slips and falls and you can buy this at the same locations mentioned above. Here is a link for rock salt, as an example: [Ice Melter & Rock Salt | Canadian Tire](#).

Pedestrian Safety Tips

Pedestrian: a person who is walking, especially in an area where there is vehicle traffic.

Being a pedestrian can come with a lot of risk. There are many dangerous factors when walking as a pedestrian so here are some safety tips to follow:

- Walk on a sidewalk when possible. If no sidewalk is available, walk in the direction facing traffic (walk on the left side of the road) with no more than two people side by side.
- Follow all traffic signals.
- Only cross the street at crosswalks.
- Only cross streets when it is safe to do so.
- Avoid walking with headphones in or while you are on the phone so that you can focus on where you are stepping, stay safe near traffic, and remain cautious of other pedestrians. Make sure there is enough space for both yourself and other when sharing the sidewalks.
- When crossing a street, look left, right, and then left again for oncoming traffic.
- When walking at night near roads, around a neighbourhood, or on campus, try to wear bright colours and reflectors so that drivers can see you. If you are wearing dark clothes and do not have reflectors, use the flashlight on your phone so that others can see you.
- Avoid walking while under the influence of anything that can impair your mobility or judgement.

Outdoor Activities

The City of St. John's has several parks to enjoy year round, for all ages. Check out what is available here: [City of St. John's Parks, Playgrounds and Trails](#) .

Some activities that to enjoy in winter weather are sledding, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, and ice skating. These winter activities can be fun when done safely.

Sledding – This is an activity that involves a mainly flat platform, usually made of plastic that one or more people can sit on and is used to glide down a snow-covered hill. When sledding, please keep these things in mind:

- Be careful near bodies of water. Some may appear frozen, but the ice may be thin and dangerous.
- Avoid sledding on steep hills and if the hill is icy instead of snowy (it can be very slippery and painful if you fall off the sled).
- Be cautious of mounds of snow, as there may be dangerous rocks underneath that you cannot see, due to snow buildup.
- Be aware of other people sledding nearby to avoid accidents.
- Wear layers and dress warmly.
- If you are not wearing snow pants, try to wear a material that will not collect water, for example, track pants that are water resistant. Track pants would be your outer layer and remember jeans are not good material to wear in the cold!
- If you are approaching the bottom of the hill and are about to slide into something like a pond, a person or a tree, roll off the side of the sled onto the hill.



Snowshoeing - This is an activity where you walk over snow wearing snowshoes. Snowshoes are flat frames with straps of material stretched across them that can be attached to boots to allow a person to walk on snow without sinking in.

Below are a few details to help when you go snowshoeing:

- Wear warm, waterproof boots as well as a hat and mitts.
- Boots must be worn for snowshoeing. Do not wear sneakers.



- Dress in layers with clothing that can handle cold, wet conditions. This means avoiding clothes like jeans because they are not water resistant and do not keep you warm.
- Bring a backpack and water bottle.

Cross-country skiing is similar to snowshoeing, only with cross-country skis instead of snowshoes. Both activities require the proper equipment, which can be expensive to purchase. You can rent these at the North Bank Lodge in Pippy Park near the University Campus to use in the park. Check the link here for [rental information](#) .



Ice skating – This is a sport or activity of moving on ice, wearing ice skates. Skates are boots with thin metal bars attached to the bottoms. Here is some information on [Ice Skating](#).

When you are skating, here are some tips to keep in mind:

- Dress according to the location. If you are skating inside an arena, you may get much warmer than when you are skating outside.
- Make sure you are wearing skates and a helmet that fit.
- Do not ice skate on any random frozen body of water. The ice may not be thick enough to hold the weight of a person. Please skate only on designated ice rinks.
- If you are new to skating, consider looking into skating lessons.



*Prepared October 2023
Internationalization Office, MUN
international@mun.ca*