**Preparing for winter in Dockenfield**

In order to maintain our “insurance cover”, and prevent the bad weather we prepare for (!), please give some thought to the following ideas for being prepared for what winter may bring – remembering it may not necessarily only be deep snow and ice. High winds, falling trees and puddles in potholes pose threats to the unwary, and there also follows some sensible advice on caring for yourself and your friends if you are “out and about” over the festive season.

Please take care and report any trouble spots to the Parish Council or your friendly local contacts (see below).

Be prepared

 If bad weather does prevail, you might:

1.      Stock up on a few essential provisions to tide you over forecast bad periods, including enough essential prescription medicines and toiletries;

2.      Count your candles and torches (and check the health of your batteries);

3.      Dust off and test your non-digital telephone for when your wireless/mobile battery dies;

4.      Check you have fuel for a fire (if you have a working fire-place) and has your chimney been swept lately?;

5.      Dig out your warm weather gear for those forays outside to clear the – and do you have a snow shovel and a supply of personal-use grit?;

6.      Wear several layers rather than one thick one;

7.      Wear a hat (woolly is best) when outside, as most body heat is lost from the head;

8.      Wear gloves with good grip;

9.      Check your outside water pipes and taps are mothballed for the winter;

10.   Locate and test your mains water stop-cock;

11.   Check your gas boiler has been tested recently and your carbon monoxide detector card is in date;

12.   If at all possible, keep heating on all the time, even if lower during periods of absence. This tends to be more efficient than re-heating from cold every day, and it will reduce the risk of loft area and other piping from freezing;

13.   Animals which usually have thin fur, or are poorly, may need animal coats or jackets if outside for long;

14.   Other outdoor pets (for example, rabbits and the like) may need extra food, extra bedding or their housing draught-proofing. Please check their drinking water frequently. If in doubt, consider moving them indoors (garage, etc). Larger animals may need additional covering and shelter;

15.   Check your car has the right fluid in its radiator and your screen wash is correctly diluted – and when did you last replace your wipers?;

16.   Check your car tyre pressures (which will drop dramatically in cold weather) and ensure you have an emergency survival kit in your car;

17.    Consider buying winter tyres;

18.   When driving, make sure your windows and windscreen are clear before setting off;

19.   If going out, let someone know where you are going and when you should get there (and be back home);

20.   Bookmark localised weather forecasting pages for those parts of the country you will be visiting - and consult them!

**Going out?**

Those who know about these things offer the following advice to younger members of our communities. Evidently, young people put themselves at added risk of hypothermia, firstly by not dressing appropriately, and secondly, not appreciating the extent to which alcohol (or other recreational aids!) blunt their awareness of loss of body heat. If looking cool is totally critical, at least stash a warm cheap jacket, scarf, gloves and leggings, or similar, in the car or in a backpack so you can slip into them on the way home when no-one is looking!  MOST OF ALL, look out for each other - and if your buddy doesn’t look too good, if at all possible, stay with them while you call for help”.

Not sure why this advice is limited to young folk only, come to think of it.

**Grit Bins**

Surrey County Council (Highways) (“SCCH”) make the following points. Whilst SCC recognises that the provision of grit bins is very popular with the public, there is no legal duty for SCCH to provide or maintain them. However, although encouraging self-help, SCCH accept they can further assist local communities, particularly those not on the P1 precautionary salting network, by siting and stocking some grit bins at strategic locations, prioritised as:-

1.      Difficult road junctions

2.      Dangerous slopes

3.      Acute bends

4.      Large numbers of pedestrians

The majority of those grit bins are inspected over the summer months and the remaining surveys completed in October each year. SCCH aim to fill any bins that are less than 75% full by the end of November. If you are concerned that a bin is still empty after this time, please report it to SCCH.

There are three Dockenfield Parish Council grit bins and six SCCH bins in the Parish, all in the same places as before. Please do not use the contents for domestic purposes.

On the road

SCCH have also issued clarification on their policies for dealing with snow and ice on the roads. Please bear in mind that “gritting” is designed to prevent ice forming, or, if practical, to assist melting of existing ice. It does not include snow clearance.

**Gritting Policy**

Priority 1 roads

Priority 1 roads are the first to be treated in advance of any forecast frost, ice or snow. Priority 1 roads include:

1.      All A roads, all B roads and roads carrying more than 8,000 vehicles per day

2.      Main access routes to hospitals

3.      Major bus routes

4.      Roads that link salting routes with those of adjoining counties

5.      Any priority 2 road which meets three or more of the criteria for priority 2 roads.

Priority 2 roads

During periods of prolonged and persistent frost, ice or snow, SCCH extend salting to include these roads, but only once P1 roads have been cleared. P2 roads include:

1.      Roads carrying more than 4,000 vehicles per day

2.      Main access routes to important industrial areas and secondary education establishments

3.      Single access points to villages

4.      Access roads leading to railway stations

5.      Roads used by other bus routes and depots

6.      Steep hazardous gradients and on bridges where local icing conditions are known to occur.

Priority 3 roads

During periods of snow clearing, the P2 network will be extended to include access routes to primary schools.

If you need help, or want to pass on some information:

 High Thicket Road – Richard Blackburn (DPC)   [Tel: 01252 797167]

The Old Convent Flats – Karen Mathews   [Tel: 01420 473044]

Great Holt - Ian Hewitt     [01420478949]

Old Lane - Pam Hibbert     [01252 792573]

Abbott's Cottages - Matt Barnes     [01252 790312]

Bealeswood Lane - Debbie Foster     [01252 792142]

The Street (East) – Seb Fox [01252 792080]

The Street (West) - Peter James     [01252 793133]

Green Lane – Chris Sutton (DPC)  [tba]

Lake Lane - Raf Wane     [01252 790841]

Alternatively, you may prefer to contact one of the Parish Friends (someone you already know and who knows you).

Finally, don’t forget that emergency messages can be sent via our Emergency Email List (our “EEL”), via the Parish Clerk (Jessica Hobday [07881 932363] or <[dockenfieldclerk@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:dockenfieldclerk@hotmail.co.uk)>).

Have a safe and problem free winter!