

Snow Days, Safe Days
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Every child is an architect. Give them Legos and they will build. Hand them a bucket of Lincoln Logs and they will construct. Present them with snow and they will scoop and dig and pat until they have produced the greatest snow fort ever in the history of the world!

Snow is a wonderful medium for experimentation and sculpting, and now that winter vacation is upon us, many children will be outside playing with the cheapest building material of all. And how abundant it is! The promise of warmer temperatures insures that they will be outside constructing for extended periods of time. That's a good thing. So, how can we make certain that their snow activities won't result in an untimely tragedy?

First and foremost, no matter what the activity, an adult should supervise children younger than eight years of age. Older children can establish a buddy system and look out for one another. Be certain that children do not play in snow that is piled up for clearing on the street or sidewalks. Tragically, children have been killed by snow cleaning equipment while playing in these banks.

With your child, define an area in your yard that is away from your driveway and safe for play, but also determine a space that is clear of your roofline. I've noted quite a selection of colossal icicles not only on the buildings of downtown Peterborough but also on many residential homes. Remind your children that as ice and snow melts, it may fall from a roof and injure someone seriously.

Small snow caves and tunnels are fun to build and generally on the day they are constructed, they are deemed solid. But as temperatures rise, their stability decreases and the risk of collapse is more prevalent. We know this. Kids may not. It's up to parents to play 'Code Officer' and inspect their award winning dwellings on a daily basis. At some point, it may be wickedly enjoyable to form a demolition team to annihilate the fort for the safety of all mankind. Or something like that. Caution your children to the fact that snow caves can collapse and must be knocked down when no longer safe.

If you're tobogganing, a helmet is the obvious fashion accessory. Who cares about a little 'après sled helmet hair'? Sure looks better than jagged stitches or a bloody abrasion...or worse. Instruct children to sled in predetermined areas free from obstacles such as trees and hidden rocks. Sledding near or onto a road is just too dangerous. Even if the road sees little traffic on a daily basis, all snow enthusiasts should remain in areas that are clear of skidding, oncoming traffic.

Have you heard the cheers of snowmobile fans throughout this winter season? They've had consistent snowfall and plenty of time to hone their skills. However, the American Board of Pediatrics recommends that children under the age of six should never ride as passengers on snowmobiles. Even with the most seasoned driver, children and adults alike should always wear helmets.

It appears as though we have many more weeks of winter remaining. Peterborough Fire & Rescue hopes that all snow architects safely enjoy the remainder of their construction season, hard hats and all...

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