



North Tahoe and Meeks Bay Fire Protection Districts



January 30, 2017

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Chief's Corner: Sierra Sun and Bonanza

"Winter weather hazards are all around, be alert and be aware."

Snow! It's everywhere, and from the looks of things, it's planning to stick around. While snow isn't anything new to the Lake Tahoe Basin and nearby areas, the massive amount of snow we've received can be a bit overwhelming to even our most seasoned locals, and not surprisingly our visitors.

You may find yourself dodging snow as it slides off tree branches, or even witness snow thundering down the sides of rooftops on a path for certain destruction. More than once you may have said with a sigh of relief "wow that was close." Whatever winter crisis you've managed to avoid unscathed, it has hopefully taught you to be alert and be aware at all times. The following are general tips to keep in mind when out and about in winter conditions.

- It's important to pay attention to all of your surroundings. Be attentive while walking. You may be focused on the snow or massive ice formations above your head, and completely forget about the ice under your feet. Keep your hands out of your pockets, and use them to help keep your balance. Move slowly and wear shoes with traction.
- Don't stand or walk under overhanging snow on the ledges of roofs. The snow can fall and cause serious damage and injury. If you have hazard snow on your roof, and you have a single story home, you can use a snow rake while on ground level to remove the snow. If you need to get on top of the roof to remove the snow, always do so in pairs. Take every safety precaution possible.
- Remove snow from propane tanks. The heavy snow that accumulates can cause a propane tank to shift in location, or cause a hose to shift slightly. If you smell propane, call 911 immediately and remove yourself from the location.
- Another possible hazard with the amount of snow we've received is snow berms. In order to keep our roadways clear, snowplow operators have to blow snow to the sides of roadways. These berms reduce visibility for pedestrians and drivers. As a pedestrian, don't assume vehicles can see you, wait for acknowledgment. Vehicle drivers need to take it slow and drive with caution, but one cannot assume this is always the case. In addition, keep kids away from the street when playing outside. The limited visibility makes it difficult for traffic to see around corners, as well as for kids/adults to see traffic.



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- Ice and snow over lakes, ponds, and streams can be deceiving. Take precaution if you, a child, or your pet is around water. Snow can mask the potential hazard. Be cautious.
- Educate yourself on avalanches, and the current avalanche conditions in your area. If you find your vehicle caught in an avalanche, immediately shut off your engine to prevent yourself from carbon monoxide poisoning. There is no place for the carbon monoxide from your vehicle to dissipate because it's blocked by snow. Remain calm, call for help if possible, and use your emergency preparedness kit you keep in your vehicle with blankets, food, and water. For more information on avalanche safety, and current avalanche conditions, visit: [www. sierraavalanchecenter.org](http://www.sierraavalanchecenter.org)

Michael Schwartz joined the North Tahoe Fire Protection District as its Fire Chief in 2012, after serving 29 years with a neighboring fire agency. Along with his wife Jean, they have been a part of the Lake Tahoe community since 1978.



Engineer Paul Moen clears the snow off the roof of Station 51 in Tahoe City. (Note the cornice along the roofline)