

Prepare your kids for winter

WildernessSurvival



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Old Man Winter will soon be blowing up an endless number of storms. For this reason, there is little wonder that many parents are concerned about sending their children off to school on cold, windy and snowy mornings. And so they should be! Consider these case studies:

- Several years ago, in downtown Brampton, an individual became disoriented while walking in a blinding snowstorm and stepped into the path of an oncoming vehicle. No hood or hat protected her head; she was not properly dressed for the weather.

- One winter, in a howling blizzard, a young Mennonite girl lost her way while returning home from school. A concentrated effort by the OPP found her that evening huddled in a snowbank; she was cold, but alive and well.

Although many cold weather injuries are the result of just plain bad luck, many others could have been prevented if children were suitably prepared for winter conditions.

Prior to sending youngsters off to school, parents should ask themselves a series of questions, including:

1. Did my son\daughter have a good, nutritious breakfast?

As we all know, a solid breakfast provides that much needed "fuel" required

by all people, especially youngsters, to function properly throughout the day. These added calories also keep students warm until they reach school. In addition, well-fed students are more attentive and perform much better in class.

2. Is my child suitably dressed for winter?

This may sound like a rather silly question; however, teachers often witness numerous pupils in the playground or on their way to school clothed as though this was summertime.

For example, many children wear running shoes, skin-tight clothing, and a short jacket, regardless of the weather. Furthermore, even in snowy conditions, some students do not don hoods or hats. A few come without mitts or gloves.

3. Do I know my child's route to school?

If your son\daughter walks, encourage him\her to use one main route to and from school. This route must be well known. Ideally, it should be explored and traveled periodically by parents.

In the event that their child is late returning or reaching school, mom or dad are advised to retrace the route in question. Furthermore, children should be given a specified time limit to reach home. If more than, let us say, 30 minutes late, youngsters must realize that you'll be out looking for them. Also, instruct your child that they are to remain on the prescribed route.

By walking and traveling this route with your children, you, the parent, can locate and point out possible refuge spots, including libraries, Block Parents, as well as any homes of friends and associates that your child can access in the event of an emergency.

4. How do I know if my child has not reached school?

Especially in snowstorms, I strongly recommend schools notify the home if a student is late or absent. Most schools now have a Safe Arrival Program: should any child be tardy or absent, parents are required to contact the school. If a student is late or absent and a call from home has not been received, a school official automatically contacts the home. This close communication between the home and school lets all parties concerned know where each child is during school hours.

Some individuals may say that these precautions are too time consuming. I agree, however, we are talking about our youngsters, are we not?

Winter can offer children fun, enjoyable and exciting experiences . . . if they're properly dressed and prepared.

