

Common sense helps winter survival

By Liz Crumley

Common sense is the key to winter survival whether you are at home, in your car or in a blizzard, according to health experts.

The most common winter injuries are due to falls, according to Ken Hubble, director of the University Health Center.

These involve sprains or fractures, he said, and can be avoided by wearing proper shoes and watching where you walk.

The second most common injury is caused by exposure, he said. This can be avoided by wearing proper clothing.

Wool is the best fabric to wear, Hubble said, adding that clothes with a high fiber concentration would be good.

Insulation effect

Hubble stressed that loose-fitting clothes provide the best insulation against the cold because the air provides a layer of insulation warmed by the person's body heat.

Socks and clothing nearest the skin should absorb perspiration. Cotton fiber is good for this purpose, he added.

While doing such activities as backpack-

ing, Hubble said, a person always should carry a change of clothing for items nearest the skin that have the possibility of getting wet.

If a person gets caught in a blizzard, he should first seek shelter. This may seem obvious, Hubble said, but many people have died because they left the shelter of their cars during a snow storm.

If shelter is unavailable, Hubble said, snow can act as an insulator and be formed to provide a temporary shelter.

Frostbite remedies

If a person suspects he is getting frostbite, Hubble said, he should warm himself as soon as possible. This should be a gradual process, he added. If necessary, snow can be rubbed on the areas.

Dr. L.J. Ekeler, emergency physician at Bryan Memorial Hospital, disagreed saying snow should not be used for rubbing if frostbite is suspected.

The person should gently massage the affected area, and if possible, submerge it in warm water. Hot water should never be used, Ekeler said.

Besides freezing, Ekeler said, chill blains are a common exposure injury. This appears as inflammatory swelling and burning, he said, but no permanent tissue damage results.

Ekeler said extensive damage can be done to extremities. In the case of severe frostbite if there is blood vessel damage, this can lead to gangrene, he said.

If a person who has had prolonged exposure to the cold stops breathing, the victim should be placed in a warm room and given artificial respiration. When he reacts, room temperature should be raised and the victim should be given a hot drink and placed in a warm bed.

Car a good shelter

If a person is caught in a car during a winter storm, he should stay there, according to all experts.

A full tank of gas at the trip's start is a must, according to Nebraska State Department of Education pamphlet.

If the car stalls, the motor can be run for hours without ill effects, it states. However, a window should be opened slightly to prevent asphyxiation.

Travelers also should carry a car kit containing:

- two or more blankets or a box of newspapers if blankets are unavailable.
- two one-gallon cans with plastic covers.
- a supply of matches and candles in one can.
- a complete change of clothing in case you get wet; winter cap, gloves, etc.
- a food supply such as candy bars which have a high protein and high sugar content.
- a transistor radio or car radio.
- a compass.
- a first aid kit.
- overshoes and shovel.
- a box of tissues or roll of toilet paper.

A small sack of sand for traction in snow and ice, flashlight, chains, plastic windshield scraper and, a fire extinguisher also are helpful. If caught in a storm, clapping your hands occasionally and moving your arms and legs vigorously is recommended to promote blood circulation. The car's dome light also should be turned on to make the car visible.

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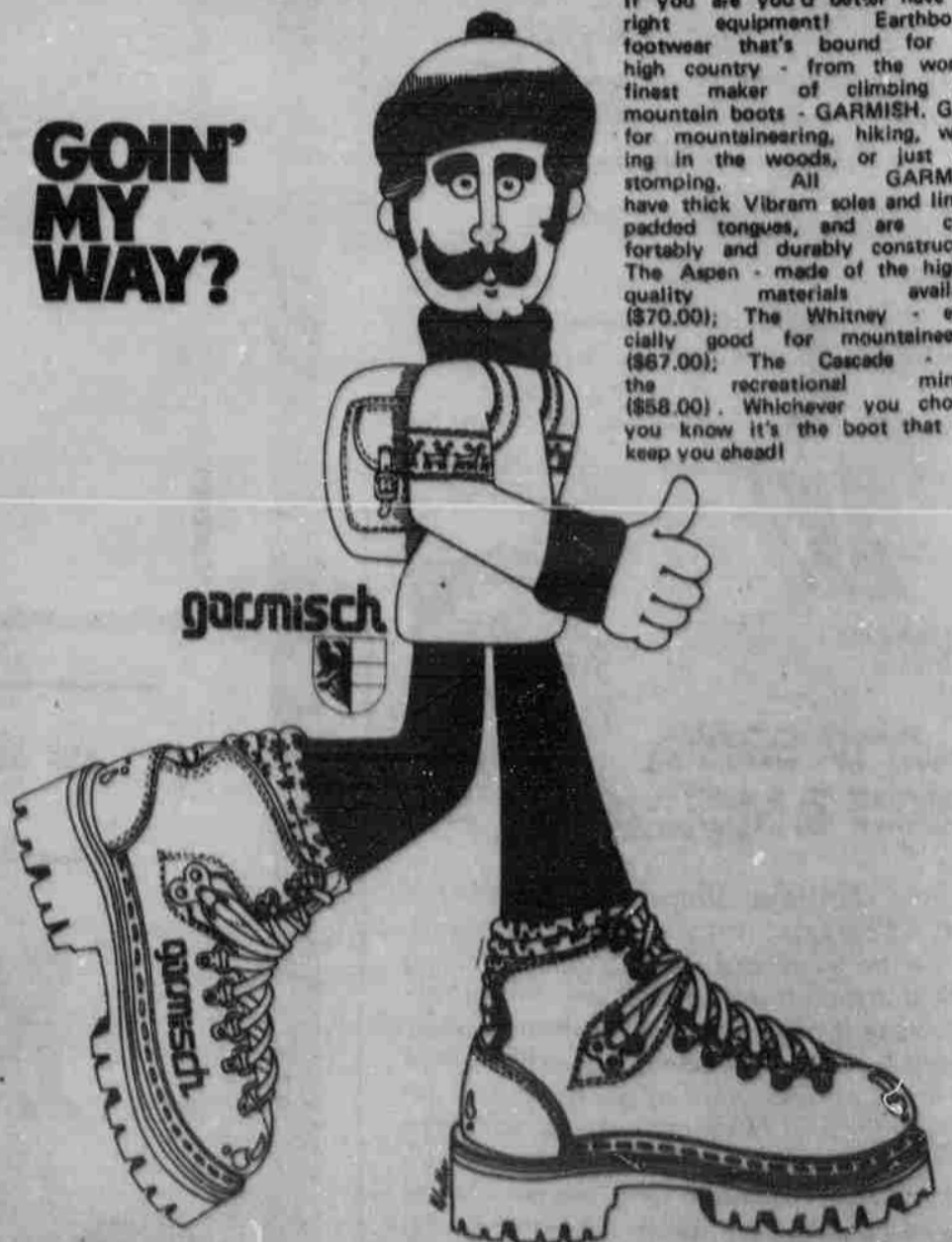
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