

# Safety in the Community

*Voices of Experience:  
Tips from people  
who “learned the  
hard way”*



## **Managing**

- Learn about (and use) community services that can provide help, such as removal of snow or leaves, 24-hour pharmacies and grocery stores that take orders by phone or internet and deliver, especially in bad weather.
- Ask for help from others.
- If possible, find out in advance whether getting to your destination is safe and easy.

## **Walking**

- Wear a cell phone or personal emergency notification device.
- Avoid wearing reading glasses when walking outdoors.
- Wear gloves, rather than walking with hands in pockets.
- Use a cane or walker to increase stability.
- Carry items with one hand, leaving one hand free for doorknobs, handrails and balancing.
- If you use a backpack or shoulder bag, use one with a strap long enough to go across your chest. This will allow your hands to be free and prevent you being pulled off-center by weight on one shoulder.

- Make more trips carrying smaller loads.
- Take extra care when transferring awkward items like walkers and groceries into and out of vehicles.
- Look carefully at floor surfaces in unfamiliar buildings. Floors made of highly polished marble or tile can be very slippery and dangerous especially if the floor is wet.
- When floors have runners in place, stay on them whenever possible, and wipe shoes thoroughly before stepping off.
- Stop at curbs to check the height before stepping up or down. Be careful where curbs have been cut away for bike or wheelchair access. Don't rush to cross a street before the signal light changes.



## **Lighting**

- Turn on the lights for outdoor stairways and walkways at night.
- Turn on the light outside the front door before leaving home in the evening.
- Stand still until your eyes adjust to the light, whether going from bright to dark or dark to bright.

## **Stairs**

- Keep one hand on the rail when going up or down stairs.
- Count your steps when going up or down stairs.
- Avoid carrying things that require both hands and block your ability to see the stairs.
- Use escalators with care: step on carefully, keep one hand on the handrail, and move clear of the escalator when stepping off.
- If you have a walker, use elevators rather than escalators.

- Keep your outdoor stairs repaired and free of clutter.
- Make sure your outdoor stairs have at least one handrail that is smooth, clear, securely attached to the wall, and easy to reach from the bottom and the top steps.
- Attach non-slip or rubber treads on your outdoor stairs, or paint the steps with a rough textured paint.
- If there is only one step to get into the house, install a grab bar to make that step easier and safer to use.
- Set your storm doors to close slowly and gently.



## **Sidewalks**

- Keep your walkways (porch, deck, sidewalk and driveway) repaired and free of leaves, ice, snow and clutter.
- Expect the unexpected, such as uneven or slippery surfaces, children and their toys, pets and their bowls, leashes and toys.

## **Adjusting to the Weather**

- Drink water often in the summer and during outdoor activities.
- Keep your feet warm enough so you can feel them.
- “Walk like a penguin” if you come upon ice, snow or slippery surfaces.

*Be assured, a little bit of planning goes a long way in preserving your independence by ensuring your safety and when out and about!*