SafetyTIPS from Assistant Fire Marshal Doug Jones An information resource for citizens Portland Fire & Rescue Fire Marshal's Office firemarshal@fire.ci.portland.or.us • (503) 823-3700

Sledding Safety Tips

Now that the cold weather and snow are here, follow these tips to keep kids safe during the sledding season:

- Help children to understand that sledding can be dangerous. Convey to them that their fun could be cut short by bumps, bruises, or even broken bones.
- Encourage sledders to lie on their backs and go feet first down the slope. Alternatively, they can sit face forward on the sled. Either approach will greatly reduce the risk of head injuries.
- Check the terrain. Look for trees, rocks, bare patches, creeks, and other obstacles. Make sure the slope is gentle, clear from top to bottom, and doesn't end near a road or freeway.
- Keep children away from makeshift snow ramps which can be hazardous.
- Dress warmly! Younger children are more susceptible than adults to hypothermia, a potentially life-threatening situation where the body temperature falls well below normal. Be sure to check youngsters often, and bring them in right away if they get wet -- water and wind can reduce body temperature quickly. Older kids should dress in warm layers; this will protect kids from the elements and help cushion falls.
- Wear helmets when sledding! Helmets have become standard equipment for sports such as skateboarding and downhill skiing, and they won't seem out of place on the sledding hill.
- Bring kids inside for regular water breaks. Sweating under heavy winter clothing and breathing hard from exertion can cause dehydration.
- Don't forget the sunscreen. Even though there may not be much skin peeking out from under those heavy coats and caps, sunlight reflecting off the snow can burn it in a hurry.
- Most importantly, watch kids and ensure they're following the rules.

It's not about saving lives; it's about saving your life.