



Forest Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

George Washington and Jefferson National Forests

Forest Service News Release

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Winter weather causes safety hazards in National Forest

Roanoke, Va. January 6, 2022—The recent winter storm has brought snow and ice to the higher elevations of the George Washington and Jefferson National Forests with more expected in subsequent storms. Although these winter conditions can be beautiful, they also bring additional hazards and safety concerns. Visitors to the National Forest should know the risks, have a plan before visiting, and let someone know their plan.

Last year multiple incidents required local search and rescue teams to assist forest visitors who had fallen on a slippery or icy trail.

Rapidly changing temperature and weather conditions, ice covered trails and roads, and falling branches laden with ice or heavy snow are among the dangers that follow a winter storm. But icy conditions can persist in shady areas, especially at high elevations, long after the storm has passed. Conditions at that start of the trail can vary greatly from conditions later in the day or further along the trail.

“I am grateful to all the county EMS and local search and rescue teams that have helped visitors in need on National Forest lands,” said Joby Timm, Forest Supervisor. “The risk of injury caused by winter conditions is serious. I hope visitors will take time to plan and be prepared ahead of their visit, whether they are planning a winter hike or venturing out to play in the snow.”

A simple day trip can end up being a life-or-death situation if you get stuck on the mountain. When planning your next adventure into the national forest, follow these safety tips:

- Travel the appropriate speed. Forest Service roads are not cleared of snow or ice. Expect roads to have icy sections throughout the winter. Motorists should avoid unnecessary travel when the weather causes treacherous driving conditions.
- Vehicle should be in good working order and have appropriate tires for snow and mud, and plenty of fuel.
- Carry an emergency road kit that supplies a map of the area, flashlight, tools, water, food, warm layered clothing and matches or other means for starting a fire.
- Many places in the National Forest do not have cell phone coverage. Let someone know when and where you are going and when you plan to return.
- If you plan to go winter hiking, wear proper shoes that can give you traction on icy trails. Don't hike alone.
- Before venturing out, check current and incoming weather conditions for your destination location and for the area you will be travelling through.

For more safety tips or for more information about the George Washington and Jefferson National Forests visit our website www.fs.fed.us/r8/gwj, call your local district office or follow us on twitter: <https://twitter.com/GWJNF>.

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