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**Winter Safety in the Mountains.**

**By M. Elliott**

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Snow-topped mountains look beautiful but they can be death-traps for the unprepared hiker or hill walker. Sadly, every year, people die and are badly injured whilst exploring these regions at this time of year.

Harsh weather conditions, bad visibility and shorter daylight hours can all conspire to catch-out the unwary. The consequences can be extremely serious.

Good preparation and a sensible attitude are essential for keeping yourself safe. Here are a few tips that could help save your life.

1)Check the weather report: Take time to listen to the radio or TV report for the area you are intending to visit. A number of websites and phone services also provide detailed information on wind speeds, temperatures and avalanche risk. Don't be afraid to change your plans to suit your abilities.

2)Proper clothing and equipment: Make sure you have suitable clothing to keep you warm and dry. Plan for sudden changes in the weather. Conditions are likely to be very different as you climb to higher elevations. Always take a map and compass (and GPS if you have one) and know how to use these. Remember to check your GPS batteries and take a spare set. In snow and ice conditions you may need to take an ice axe and crampons with you. Make sure your crampons are compatible with your boots. You can get advice on this from any good outdoor shop. Know how to use an ice axe properly. Get tuition if necessary.

3)Route planning: Plan your route carefully beforehand. Taking into account the conditions and fitness and experience of you and your group. Avoid dangerous or high risk areas. Plan an 'escape route' if conditions deteriorate. Leave details of your intended route with a trusted person at home. Check-in with them when you have safely returned. Give them clear instructions of what to do if you do not contact them by a certain pre-arranged time. Don't forget that your route will take longer to complete

## Winter Safety in the Mountains.

than it would in summer.

4)Food and drinks: Take plenty of food and high energy snacks with you. Take a flask for a warm drink. You are likely to be expending much more energy at this time of year. Eat snacks regularly and drink often. Just keeping warm takes energy! Make sure you are well hydrated before you set out and have a good breakfast. Take some emergency rations with you in case of problems.

5)Be aware: Be aware of any deterioration in the conditions. Take sensible precautions to avoid dangerous areas. Look out for slippery ground. Don't take unnecessary risks. Watch for signs of hypothermia and exhaustion of group members.

6)First Aid: Take a good first aid kit with you and know how to use it. There are many excellent First Aid courses available. Having these skills can be a great asset.

7)Emergencies: Take an emergency blanket or shelter with you and an emergency whistle. Six blasts of the whistle is an internationally recognised distress signal! Don't rely on your mobile phone to get help. There are many areas that you cannot get a signal.

Winter in the mountains can be a magical experience and one that can be enjoyed safely if you are properly prepared and equipped.

Take a little time to get prepared - it could save your life.

M. Elliott is Director of the U.K. based outdoor company – Hill–Tribe Limited, PO Box 52, Cockermouth, Cumbria, CA13 0WF, U.K.

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### **Winter Tire Myths Revealed**

**By News Canada**

(NC) —True or false - your vehicle is only as good as the tires it sits on? While you may have your own opinion on this, Michelin believes that tires are an essential part of your vehicle's safety, handling and performance.

Tire manufacturers like Michelin, as well as associations like Transport Canada and the Rubber Association of Canada, are working to increase awareness of the importance of tires as well as dispelling some common tire myths.

"The biggest tire myth is that they are a low-tech commodity," explains Tony Mougios, Michelin Brand Manager in Canada. "The reality is that advancements in tire technology have improved the quality and performance of today's tires. Few people seem to realize the additional safety obtained from installing four winter tires on their vehicles."

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The following is a basic example of a common winter tire myth.

**Myth:** All-season tires are so good that winter tires are never needed.

**Reality:** In some parts of the world, where temperatures and snowfalls are moderate, this may be true. But this is Canada - our winter weather is unpredictable and can be harsh. Just ask anyone from Halifax who endured the city's record snowfalls last winter.

The reality is that harsh winter conditions can appear anywhere in Canada, and when they do, the traction and added safety provided by winter tires cannot be beat. Winter tires reign supreme in rural areas where snow can remain on the road for extended periods of time. They provide 25 per cent improved traction over all-season tires.

To learn more about the advantages of winter tires and other advancements in tire technology, visit a local authorized Michelin dealer or visit [www.michelin.ca](http://www.michelin.ca).

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