**Tips for REALTORS® to Survive the Cold Winter Months**

By: Peter McPhail, ALCOwners/Brokers of McPhail Realty in Lincoln, Maine

In the Northeast, we do not have tornados, hurricanes or earthquakes of any significance. We can have some flooding of streams and rivers in the spring snowmelt, but rarely is this anything too dangerous. Maine does not have poisonous snakes, although, some would argue our black flies and mosquitoes in the spring make up for it. That being said, our winter weather can be unpredictable, and if unprepared, you can find yourself in danger rather quickly.

**Braving the Great Outdoors, Safely**

Temperatures in January and February can take a 60-degree swing in a matter of 24 hours when you take into consideration the wind chill factor. Before heading out, always make sure you let someone know where you are going and provide a map, if appropriate. If you are looking at multiple properties that are miles apart, check in with your office once you’ve left one property and start heading to another.

Now, let’s talk a little bit about preparing for driving, showing homes, and remote land parcels in these conditions.

* First, make sure your vehicle has a good quality set of snow tires with studs to keep from going off the road and getting stuck where AAA will not go. Also, make sure you have a full tank of gas.
* Inside the vehicle, you should have the essentials to hold you over for a night in the cold. Cellular reception can be unreliable in remote parts of the Northeast and most agents don’t carry satellite phones. You can invest in a cell booster, but we’ve had mixed results with those products. A warm blanket or cold weather sleeping bag is an easy solution to pack in your trunk.
* Keep a generous supply of “Hot Hands” hand, toe and body warmers in your vehicle; these can be found at your local Wal-Mart.
* Consider having a good quality snow shovel, tow rope, LED flash light and battery jump starter as part of your arsenal as well.
* Finish off your list with some snacks that won’t freeze, such as granola bars or trail mix, and something to drink (leave the St. Bernard at home).
* Some of the vacant homes we show in the winter are not kept plowed out. If you work in places with similar conditions, you will need snow shoes to get over the 5-6 foot high snow bank.

**Enough about Homes -- Let’s Talk about LAND!**

If you are going to snow shoe Maine land or any land where winter weather is present, it is best to bring someone with you. We have a lot of absentee land owners that will call us in the winter to list their property for sale; we always try to go as a team, just in case.

Last winter, we were snow-shoeing a 100 acre wood lot in Swanville, Maine, near the coast. The temperatures that day were hovering around ZERO degrees. I broke trail uphill for about half of a mile until the topography leveled off and then Phil graciously offered to take the lead. Within the next half of a mile Phil took a step onto what appeared to be a small snow drift and his right foot sank about three feet and twisted on its way down through a snow covered slash pile. This catapulted Phil face-first into the snow and the pressure on his ankle pinned him to the ground. I had to work at freeing his right foot and helping him upright on his snow shoes. Had I not been there, the Land Brothers would probably just be the Land Bro today.

Carry backpacks with trail mix, water, something to start a fire, compass and a small battery pack to recharge our cells or a GPS device. I also like to carry a multi-tool on my belt and side arm.

The best advice we can give, check the weather report the night before and reschedule the trip when in doubt.

*About the author:* ***Peter McPhail, ALC****, and his brother* ***Phil McPhail, ALC****, are the Owners/Brokers of McPhail Realty in Lincoln, Maine. Both Peter and Phil are actives members of the* [*REALTORS® Land Institute*](http://www.rliland.com) *and have earned the esteemed Accredited Land Consultant (ALC) designation. The two have a combined 22 plus years of experience in the real estate industry.*