

Be Prepared...In Season and Out of Season  
by Joe Krause, Terry School Superintendent & Principal

I was privy to a conversation about a couple high school boys getting in minor car accidents during our recent snowfall. Neither of them were injured and they were fortunate to drive away from the ditch and guardrail. However, neither of them were likely to have adequate winter gear if they were stuck in the cold. I know this because they didn't have winter gear in their car on Monday morning...wearing only cowboy boots, jeans, and a sweatshirt for their ten-mile ride to school. It was minus five degrees on Monday morning.

While being 17 years old was 38 years ago for me, I still remember the invincibility that I felt while believing that accidents happened to "other people." Most kids have a tough time knowing how "age" thinks and feels. That's why they need all of us oldies to harp on them and let them know that accidents are called "accidents" because they're accidents...you rarely expect them to happen.

Having just spent the last two years living at the end of the road system in Manley Hot Springs, Alaska, I tend to prepare for travel. I usually have two full-sized spares, extra winter gear, candles, matches, blankets, and traffic flares. While I tried not to travel when it was below minus 40 degrees, sometimes the weather would change in the 160 miles and five hours it took to get to Fairbanks. I had a belt break on Ptarmigan Pass a couple years back and needed to wait three hours until someone drove by and gave me a ride. When a belt breaks your truck usually doesn't have a working heater. I was lucky that Oodie picked me up. He happened to be driving to Fairbanks, too. He was even more prepared than I was because he always carried an extra belt. He also had a belt break in the middle of nowhere and wasn't going to be stuck because of that again.

This article is simply a reminder to be prepared and to help the kids in your life remember to be prepared for the cold weather. While my Interior Alaska schools had minus 20 degrees as a cutoff for having outside recess, Terry School's policy is "no outside recess at below zero degrees...windchill or actual temperature." Zero is still very cold, so please help the kids in your life get bundled up appropriately. Hats, gloves, snowpants, scarves, neck-warmers, and winter boots will help our students have fun on the playground. Being prepared may even help our high schoolers who drive to school. They don't necessarily have to wear it all! Just have them keep an extra set of gear...even old stuff...in their car or truck. If they ignore you, sneak it in their trunk, behind their seat, or under their seat. I guarantee you they'll immediately begin looking for warmth if they're by the side of the road, it's ten-below zero, and they're waiting for a tow truck or parent to pick them up.