

MAUNA KEA WINTER HAZARDS

Along with all of the general hazards encountered at the high altitude of Mauna Kea, there are additional hazards during the winter months:

WEATHER

Near the summit, winter weather can produce temperatures below 10 degrees Fahrenheit and high winds create chill factors as low as 40 degrees below zero. Snow and ice can rapidly make the road hazardous or impassable. Winter storms can last for over a week, and persons trapped on the upper roads are in a life threatening situation.

DO NOT BECOME ENTRAPPED ON THE MOUNTAIN. EVACUATE WHEN ICE OR SNOW BEGIN TO FORM ON THE ROAD.

SNOW PLAY

The snow on the slopes of Mauna Kea often becomes covered with ice. The bottoms of the steep slopes generally end in rocks. Striking these rocks has caused serious injuries and can be fatal.

BE CAUTIOUS WHEN SKIING, SNOW BOARDING OR OTHERWISE PLAYING ON THE STEEP SLOPES.

SUNLIGHT

The already strong ultraviolet (UV) sunlight at the summit is intensified further by reflections off the snow on the ground. The cool air temperature masks the sensation of sunburn. Even short exposure times can result in severe sunburn and snow blindness.

UV BLOCKING SUNSCREEN, SUNGLASSES, AND HEAD WEAR ARE ESSENTIAL SAFETY ITEMS.

FALLING ICE

In the winter, ice regularly forms on the observatory buildings and other structures. This ice melts in the daytime and large fragments fall to the ground without warning.

DO NOT APPROACH OBSERVATORY BUILDINGS AND OTHER STRUCTURES WHEN ICE IS PRESENT.

TRAFFIC

Stopping distances are greatly increased when there is snow or ice on the road. Drivers should expect to see a lot of vehicles and pedestrians on the road.

DRIVERS NEED TO DRIVE SLOWLY AND WATCH FOR PEDESTRIANS. LIKEWISE, PEDESTRIANS MUST LOOK FOR VEHICLES BEFORE STEPPING OUT ON THE ROAD.