

3rd December 2010

IAEM Issues Advice to the Public during current Severe Weather Conditions

During the current period of extreme weather there has been a greater than normal number of patients presenting to Emergency Departments (EDs) with limb fractures (mainly to the wrist, shoulder and ankle) as well as with chest and head injuries. Most of the victims are older members of society and many EDs saw a peak of presentation on Sunday and Monday as many of these falls occurred when older people were making their way to or from Sunday religious services.

Compared with the numbers attending in late December 2009 and early January 2010, when the last extremely severe weather gripped the country, the numbers attending EDs nationally with injuries is somewhat less on this occasion. This is attributable to better preparation, lessons learned from the experience last winter and also explained by different amounts of snowfall which have fallen on different parts of the country resulting in some variation in weather conditions.

The Irish Association for Emergency Medicine advises the public to take particular care during this time when all citizens are vulnerable to falling and sustaining injuries. It is imperative that older patients, who are most vulnerable to falling, take particular care in keeping warm at all times. Where possible, they should avoid going outside during this period and should limit this to when absolutely necessary. We urge the general public to assist their elderly neighbours where possible, by calling in on them and assisting with essential chores and shopping.

Given the number of older people who have presented to EDs having fallen going to and from religious services, they are advised to ensure that they are accompanied by an able bodied friend to assist them where possible.

A further group of concern are pedestrians, many of whom have taken to walking on roads as these are felt to be 'safer'. Should this be absolutely necessary it is imperative that pedestrians walk on the side of the road so they are facing traffic, wear bright, warm clothes so that they are easily seen and avoid attempting to cross roads in front of moving traffic as drivers' capacity to stop on slippery roads is going to be impaired.

The Association strongly endorses the sensible advice given by bodies such as the [Road Safety Authority](#) and [Age Action Ireland](#).

President:

Mr. Fergal Hickey FRCS, FRCSEd, DA(UK), FCEM
Consultant in Emergency Medicine

Sligo General Hospital
The Mall
Sligo
Ireland

Tel No: +353 71 9174505
Fax No: +353 71 9174646

Secretary:

Mr. John McInerney FRCSEd, DipIMC, FCEM.
Consultant in Emergency Medicine,

Mater Misericordiae University Hospital
Eccles St.
Dublin 7
Ireland

Tel No: +353 1 803 4342
Fax No: +353 1 803 2850

Treasurer:

Mr. Niall O'Connor DCH, DOBs, MRCP, FRCSEd, FCEM
Consultant in Emergency Medicine

Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital
Drogheda
Co. Louth
Ireland

Tel No: +353 41 9874791
Fax No: +353 41 9874799