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## **NEWS RELEASE**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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### **Winter Weather Conditions Create Hazards for Seniors**

*Fit and Fall Proof™ Program can help Seniors Gain Strength and Improve Safety*

Eastern Idaho – With winter here, Idaho public health officials are urging seniors to understand and follow safety tips to help prevent outdoor falls caused by icy conditions. Falls are the leading cause of accidental injury deaths among Idahoans 65 and older, with Idaho EMS responding to more than 5,500 fall-related calls for that age group in 2010.

“Winter can be an especially dangerous time of year for falls when sidewalks, parking lots, and steps become covered in ice,” says Timalee Geisler, Fit and Fall Proof™ Program Coordinator. “Those who are at risk for falls should be especially cautious and aware of outdoor conditions. Fit and Fall Proof™ classes offered locally can help seniors gain the strength and confidence they need to improve their safety during winter months.”

Seniors should also consider taking the following precautions to make outdoor outings safer in the winter:

- Wear shoes that have traction. Carry dress shoes with you and change at your destination.
- Carry a cell phone when you are outside.
- Keep an eye out for wet floors or stairs that may be slippery due to melting snow.
- Go slowly to keep your balance. Plan for extra time.
- Strengthen your legs. If you slip, strong muscles can help catch you. If you do fall, they can help you get up easier.

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One way to strengthen leg muscles and improve balance is to take part in the free local Fit and Fall Proof™ classes listed below. These classes offer low to moderate intensity exercises designed to reduce the risk of falls and improve mobility, balance and strength. The classes also offer seniors an opportunity to expand their social network.

Current Fit and Fall Proof™ class dates, times, and locations:

Ammon LDS North Stake Bldg. (near 17 <sup>th</sup> Street & 45 <sup>th</sup> East) 10:00 – 11:00 a.m. Monday, Wednesday, Friday	Idaho Falls Senior Center 10:30 – 11:15 a.m. Monday and Thursday	Mackay Senior Center 10:45 – 11:30 a.m. Monday and Friday
Milo LDS Church Building 75 <sup>th</sup> East Milo Road 11:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. Monday and Wednesday	Teton View Apartments Rigby 3:30 – 4:15 p.m. Monday and Wednesday	Ririe Senior Center 11:00 – 11:45 a.m. Tuesday and Friday
Madison County Senior Center 11:00 – 11:45 a.m. Tuesday and Thursday	Village Community Gardens 121 N. Center Street, Rexburg 9:15 – 10:00 a.m. Tuesday and Thursday	Rigby LDS Stake Center 258 West 1 North 1:00 – 1:45 p.m. Tuesday and Thursday

Another step to preventing outdoor falls is to check the areas around seniors' homes. Make sure railings on steps are secure and there is salt and a shovel handy inside the house. Keep an eye out for falling snow and ice from roof or gutters. Ice and snow should be removed as soon as possible.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), an older adult is treated in a hospital emergency room for a fall every 18 seconds, and every 35 minutes an older adult dies as a result of a fall-related injury. In Idaho, there is an average of 113 fall-related deaths among seniors each year. Taking precautions to prevent winter falls can help reduce this number and improve the quality of life for many seniors.

For a complete list of classes and more tips on preventing falls, visit Eastern Idaho Public Health District website at <http://www.phd7.idaho.gov> or call Timalee Geisler at 208-533-3149.