**Caring for our Facility Blessings - Fall Safety Steps for Congregations**

*“. . . for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you. Psalm 116:7*

Fall is a time of bounty as we share in the blessings of the harvest. It is also a great time to take steps to care for the blessings we have in our church facilities by doing some outside clean-up and making a general safety check. Arrange to get the furnace and any chimneys checked so any repairs and cleaning can be done, repair damaged windows, and make driveway and sidewalk repairs. Be sure to change the batteries in your smoke detectors as well when you make the Daylight Savings clock change. All will go a long way to make the winter months safer and warmer. You will also want to clean around the outside perimeter of your building including leaf raking and picking up any debris that could clog storm drains and cause slips and falls when covered by winter snow.

Tips for safe leaf raking for church and at-home backyard clean-up.

* Clear the yard. Before you rake, pick up fallen branches or debris that you could trip over.
* Stretch. As with any physical activity, you should warm up your [muscles](http://www.azcentral.com/style/hfe/outdoors/articles/2005/11/19/20051119ho6fill1119.html##) first with 10 minutes of light exercise. Stretch again after raking to relieve tension.
* Pace yourself. Raking is an [aerobic activity](http://www.azcentral.com/style/hfe/outdoors/articles/2005/11/19/20051119ho6fill1119.html##). Take frequent breaks, and replenish fluids to prevent dehydration. If you experience chest pain, [shortness of breath](http://www.azcentral.com/style/hfe/outdoors/articles/2005/11/19/20051119ho6fill1119.html##) or any other signs of a heart attack, call 911.
* See what you're raking. Don't let a hat or scarf block your vision. Watch out for large rocks, low branches, tree stumps and uneven surfaces.
* Wear the right footwear. Shoes or boots with slip-resistant soles will help prevent falls.
* Use the right rake. Choose one that feels comfortable for your height and strength, not too short or too long. Allow space between your hands on the tool grip to increase your leverage. Choose a rake that has a padded handle or wear gloves.
* Rake smart. Don't throw leaves over your shoulder or to the side. That requires a twisting motion that places undue stress on your back. (When putting the rake down, even for a few moments, to perform another task; make sure the tines are toward the ground to avoid accidental injury.)
* Vary your movements. Alternate your [leg](http://www.azcentral.com/style/hfe/outdoors/articles/2005/11/19/20051119ho6fill1119.html##) and arm positions often. When picking up leaves, bend at the knees, not the waist. Keep leaf piles small, so you don't strain your back while gathering.
* Avoid overfilling bags. You should be able to carry bags comfortably, so make sure they aren't too heavy or large. This is especially important when leaves are wet.[[1]](#footnote-1)
1. https://www.thespruce.com/leaf-rakes-blowers-vacuums-1403265 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)