

Keep Your Cat Safe From Electric Shock

Winter weather increases the danger of electrical shocks to cats, dogs.

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Cats that are outdoors in colder climates may be at risk of electrical shock, according to the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. Stray voltage currents on city streets can be a threat to animals.

Stray voltage, most often present in northern climates and urban areas, occurs when dormant utilities leak excess electricity. The combination of wet streets and melting salt-treated ice can cause shock, injury and even death for pets. "Since salt used to treat icy streets is a great conductor of electricity, the risk of shock from stray voltage is that much higher during the winter months," says Dr. Louise Murray, ASPCA director of medicine.

(For maximum safety, experts recommend keeping cats indoors-only during all the seasons.)

Here are more recommendations from the ASPCA: Metal fixtures, such as lampposts, grates or manhole covers, are particularly hazardous as they may conduct electricity.

Observe your cat's behavior. Is he skittish, frightened, angry or upset for no apparent reason? These sudden behavioral changes could be an indication of electric shock.

If your cat is incapacitated due to shock, don't try to touch or move him without protective gear. Your cat may pass the current to you, rendering you both incapable of seeking help. Instead, call your local fire department immediately.