

Keep Your Dog Safe From Electric Shock

Cold weather and icy streets can increase the risk of electric shock during winter.

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Dogs on walks in colder climates may be at risk of electrical shock, according to the ASPCA. Stray voltage currents on city streets can be a threat to animals seeking outdoor exercise in winter. Most often present in northern climates and urban areas, stray voltage occurs when dormant utilities leak excess electricity. When streets are wet and salt-based ice melts, this combination can cause shock, injury, and even death for some 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.

To avoid this hazard, the ASPCA recommends the following tips to keep your pet safe, and suggests what to do if your pet has suffered an electrical shock. Keep your dog away from metal fixtures, such as lampposts, grates, or manhole covers. While these spots may be your pet’s favorite place to relieve himself, they may also conduct hazardous electricity. Your dog’s snazzy rubber rain boots may look good, but they won’t protect him from a strong current. Don’t depend on them to keep your pet safe. Some boots — those with metal studs, for example — may even make the situation worse. Observe your dog’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 dog is incapacitated due to shock, don’t try to touch or move him without protective gear. Your dog may pass the current to you, rendering you both incapable of seeking help. Instead, call your local fire department immediately.