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Get Ready for Winter Driving

Guiding a vehicle from one place to the next is a particularly challenging task in winter weather. Too often drivers underestimate the knowledge and skill that safe driving demands. This lack of understanding often results in a preventable tragedy. When winter weather is involved, the situation is dramatically increased.

These are some of the factors which add hazards to driving in the winter:

- ◆ Ice, snow, and even water on road surfaces reduce traction, increasing stopping distance, and possibly resulting in a skid. It takes more distance to stop on an icy road than it does on a dry road.
- ◆ As the temperature rises to near the melting point, roads become even more slippery than they are in severely cold weather. Traffic also polishes ice and snow pack on a road surface.
- ◆ Black ice is a thin and invisible layer of frost on pavement. It commonly occurs around bridges and overpasses and shaded areas, but be alert for it on all road surfaces.
- ◆ Water which may be mixed with oil on the road surfaces can be hazardous. Tires begin to lose contact with the road surface, slipping across the surface of the water and oil instead.
- ◆ Visibility decreases drastically in winter driving conditions. Long nights and short days in some areas mean you spend more hours behind the wheel when you can see little beyond your headlights. Snow, rain and fog also cut visibility.
- ◆ Vehicle breakdown under winter conditions can be life threatening because of freezing weather and the possibility of chain reaction collisions.



Those tips will help generally through the season. But keep these other pointers in mind when the temperatures drop and the roads are icy or snow-covered:

- ◆ Clear all snow from your car's windows, lights, license plates, and roof. Snow blowing from the roof of your car is a visibility hazard to the driver behind you.
- ◆ Back off. Have patience and give people more lead-time, especially if there's snow on the road. You'll thank yourself when the car ahead suddenly spins out.
- ◆ If you go into a skid, take your foot off the gas, steer into the skid, and regain control. If you have to stop right away, pump your brakes - don't slam on them. If your car has anti-lock braking systems (ABS), apply steady pressure to the brake pedal.
- ◆ Prepare your car. In a cold climate, plug in a block heater, add fuel line de-icer to the fuel tank, and consider using a battery warmer. Keep your tires properly inflated (check them before you drive) so that you never feel the flat spot of frozen tread as you start off in the morning.
- ◆ Carry a winter survival kit, especially on long trips or in isolated areas. Include matches and a candle, a parka and sleeping bag or emergency blanket, food, first aid kit, jumper cables with safety goggles, gasoline antifreeze, fuel conditioner for diesel fuel, wrenches for minor repairs, a spare fan belt and radiator hose, spare spark plugs and spark plug wire.
- ◆ It is important to have a working knowledge of basic vehicle repairs so you know what to do in case of a breakdown-in any season.



The most important safety tip to keep in mind when driving in the snow is to slow down and be careful! Give yourself some extra time to get to your destination. And we'll see you in the spring.