

Winter Driving Safety

Introduction:

Driving in winter weather creates a great challenge for vehicles and drivers. Winter conditions such as freezing temperatures, rain, snow, black ice and reduced daylight hours can present serious driving hazards.

BEFORE:

- Have your vehicle inspected and winterized by a qualified mechanic prior to the winter season.
- Install winter tires. Winter tires are more suitable, especially in rural areas and highway driving.
- Keep a windshield scraper and small broom for ice and snow removal.
- Maintain at least a half tank of gas during the winter season.
- Check for the latest road conditions before heading out by listening to the radio or calling 511 for provincial highways and 1-888-432-3233 for local roads. Remember when you are making your decision to travel during a storm, that major highways are cleared first and salted more frequently than the other roads.
- Don't take chances if the weather is bad. It is much safer to stay at home wait until conditions improve. Remember, it is you who makes the final decision whether or not it is safe to drive your vehicle.
- If you must travel somewhere during a winter storm, allow yourself extra time, and if it is available, use public transportation.
- Call your client if you may be late or if the weather is not safe to be travelling in and suggest a later visit when roads have been plowed and salted.

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- Clear snow and ice from all windows, lights, mirrors, and the roof. After starting your vehicle, wait for the fog to clear from the interior of the windows so you will have good visibility all around.
- Dress appropriately for the weather conditions, including wearing layers of loose fitting, lightweight clothing and winter boots. Carry a tool, scarf and mitts at all times.
- Always wear your seatbelt.
- Make sure you know how to use your braking system in all weather and road conditions.
- Carrying a winter car kit is important for your safety. The kit should include as many of the listed items as possible:
 - First Aid Kit, flashlight, batteries, road map, compass, warning light or flares
 - Ice Scraper, shovel and sand or kitty litter for generating traction
 - Spray bottle of Windshield washer fluid and fuel line antifreeze
 - Booster cables, tow rope or chain
 - Small tool kit (pliers, wrench, screwdriver, pocket knife)
 - Blanket, extra clothes including: gloves, scarf, hat and boots

- Newspapers for insulation, plastic bags for sanitation
- Garbage bag to place over your winter clothes to provide a vapor barrier
- Bottled water, juice and non-perishable foods – chocolate, granola bars and nuts
- Bright cloth to be used as a flash flag, tied to the Aerial or a Help sign for your window
- Personal cellular telephone, if available, reflective vest, cloth or paper towel
- Matches in a waterproof container, candles in a deep can (for warming hands, heat a drink, melt snow, or use as an emergency light)
- Can of tire inflator and sealant

DURING:

- Follow the three key elements for winter driving: Stay alert, slow down and stay in control. Drive according to the road and weather conditions.
- Never assume that because the temperature is above zero that the roads are safe.
- Watch for black ice at temperatures between +4°C and -4°C, where the road surface ahead looks black and shiny. It is often found on shaded areas of the road, bridges and overpasses long after the sun has come out. Road salt is not effective below -10°C. Black ice can cause you to lose traction and go into a skid.

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- Do not use Overdrive or Cruise Control in extreme weather.
- Always drive with your headlights on so you can be seen in low light conditions or when blowing snow reduces visibility.
- Avoid sudden or abrupt braking, accelerating or turning on wet, snowy, or icy roads that can make your car skid. Make your moves smoothly and steadily.
- If you start to skid, don't panic, brake or accelerate. Look and steer smoothly in the direction you want to go.
- If you are driving slowly and traffic is building up behind you, pull over if safe to do so and let the vehicles pass. This will prevent some drivers from passing in unsafe circumstances.
- Don't pass unless you're sure it's safe. Never pass a plow when it is clearing snow from the road. Whiteout conditions are often created in front of the plow, which reduces visibility and increases the chance of an accident.
- Follow vehicles at a safe distance. It can take up to 12 times further to stop on snow and ice than on dry pavement. Instead of the 2-second rule, count 4 seconds for a safe distance between you and vehicle in front of you.
- Always drive defensively and leave enough space to avoid snow and slush spray as it can cause sudden loss of visibility.
- Keep a safe distance away or slow down and move over when approaching emergency vehicles, snow plows and other vehicles on the side of the road.
- Don't park on the roadside as you create a safety hazard for other vehicles, snow plows and for yourself when getting in and out of your vehicle.

IF TRAPPED IN YOUR VEHICLE DURING A BLIZZARD:

- Put on your 4-way flashers. Contact your supervisor to alert and get help.

- Stay in the car. Do not leave the car to search for assistance unless help is visible within approximately 100 meters. You may become disoriented and lost in blowing or drifting snow.
- Display your trouble sign and/or hang your brightly colored cloth out of the window.
- Occasionally run engine to keep warm. Turn on the car's engine for about ten minutes each hour. Run the heater when the car is running and turn on the dome light.
- Be aware of carbon monoxide poisoning. Keep the exhaust pipe clear of snow, and open a window (one that is in the opposite direction of the wind), for ventilation.
- Do minor exercises to keep up circulation. Clap your hands and move arms and legs occasionally. Try not to stay in one position for too long and stay awake.

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- Wear a hat and scarf as you can lose up to 60% of your body heat through your head. Don't wait to get cold before putting on extra clothes.
- Watch for signs of frostbite and hypothermia. Use newspapers, maps, garbage bags and even removable car mats for added insulation.
- Avoid overexertion when shoveling snow or pushing the car as cold weather puts an added strain on the heart. It can bring on a heart attack or make other medical conditions worse.
- Drink the water or liquids that you have with you to prevent dehydration. Remember to ration food and liquids in case you are there for an extended period of time.
- If you experience a travel delay, vehicle breakdown, accident or any other type of incident, after ensuring your own safety, notify the on-call supervisor as soon as safely possible and complete the appropriate reporting forms.