

Tips for Safe Winter Driving

WHAT'S AT STAKE

Wet, cold and icy weather push our driving skills to the limit. Do you know how to drive properly in winter conditions? Spending a few minutes thinking about it now could save you from problems later when you're out on the road.

WHAT'S THE DANGER

Driving always requires care and caution, but winter driving has even greater challenges because of wet and icy road surfaces, longer hours of darkness and poor visibility due to snow, rain and fog.

EXAMPLE

Tom was travelling to his parent's home over state lines for the holidays. He decided to start off on his trip that evening rather than wait till the morning. He knew he would be arriving close to 2 a.m. but he was so excited to be going home for Christmas that he just jumped in the car without much preparation. He started to notice the weather cooling down as he drove into the night but didn't think much of it until he saw the salt truck ahead of him on the overpass. By then it was too late to stop. Tom's car swerved one way and then another as he frantically jerked the steering wheel attempting to regain control before he slammed head first in the concrete barrier. Tom was pronounced dead at the scene. The weather forecast had called for a freeze in the area before midnight.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

- Check the current road conditions and weather forecast for the areas you will be traveling before you start your trip.
- Allow for extra time so you're not rushing to get to your destination. If possible travel during daylight only and consider delaying your trip if the weather's bad. Notify someone of your route and planned arrival time.
- Maintain a safe following distance. It takes longer to stop on a slippery road. Look ahead and keep plenty of distance between you and other cars (at least four seconds).
- Drop your speed to match road conditions. The posted speed is the maximum speed under ideal conditions. In winter, it's safer to drive below the posted speed. No matter how much experience you have, you can't always predict how your car will move on snow or ice.
- Watch for black ice, a thin coating of ice that's almost invisible but very dangerous. It can cause your vehicle to suddenly lose traction, braking and cornering control. Slow down when approaching shaded areas, bridges and overpasses as these sections of road freeze sooner than others in cold weather.
- Accelerate and brake slowly. When starting from a stop on slick roads, start slowly and accelerate gradually to maintain traction and avoid spinning your wheels. When stopping, plan well in advance, apply the brakes gently and slowly add pressure rather than braking suddenly.
- Avoid sudden moves. Slow down and steer smoothly and gradually to avoid skidding. Accelerate gently, turn slowly and brake carefully and early. Avoid unexpected quick movements that could put you in a spin. Anticipate turns, stops and lane changes well before they occur.
- Know how to handle a skid. A skid happens when your wheels slide out of control on a slippery surface and is a result of driving too fast for road conditions. If you start to skid, ease off the brake or accelerator, look and steer smoothly in the direction you want to go. Be careful not to over-steer. If you're on ice and skidding in a straight line, step on the clutch or shift to neutral.
- See and be seen. It's critical for drivers to see and be seen in low light conditions and when blowing snow impairs visibility. Always drive with your headlights on.
- Be extremely cautious when approaching highway maintenance vehicles such as snow plows and salt or sand trucks. Maintain a safe following distance. These vehicles throw up snow and spray, making it difficult to see.

FINAL WORD

Severe weather can be both frightening and dangerous for automobile travel. Take your time and plan ahead.

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Job Name: _____ Date: _____

Questions:

1. Before starting a road trip in the winter, what should you know about the area you'll be traveling through?

2. The posted speed limit on a road or highway is the safest minimum speed for all road conditions.

True False

3. In winter conditions, you should drive below the posted speed limit.

True False

4. How can you maintain traction and avoid spinning your wheels when starting from a stop on slick roads?

5. What should you do if you start to skid?

Meeting Attended By:

Please print name here.

Initial here.

Please print name here.	Initial here.

Supervisor Signature: _____ Date: _____