

Winter Driving Safety Tips

The leading cause of death during the winter storms is transportation accidents. Winter driving can be inconvenient, annoying, and even infuriating. You can offset these aggravations and minimize the special risks of winter driving. Prepare your vehicle for the winter season and know how to react if stranded or lost on the road. These are the keys to safe winter driving:

To prepare for winter driving remember the three P's:

- Prepare for the trip
- Protect yourself
- Prevent crashes on the road

Prepare for the trip:

Maintain your car. Have a mechanic check the following items on your car:

- Battery
- Antifreeze
- Wipers and windshield washer fluid
- Ignition system
- Thermostat
- Lights
- Flashing hazard lights
- Exhaust system
- Heater
- Brakes
- Defroster
- Oil level

Have on hand:

- Flashlight and extra batteries
- First aid kit with pocket knife
- Necessary medications
- Several blankets
- Sleeping bags
- Extra newspapers for insulation
- Plastic bags for sanitation
- Matches
- Extra set of mittens, socks, and a wool cap
- Rain Gear and extra clothes
- Abrasive material (like sand or kitty litter) for generating traction under wheels
- Small Shovel
- Small tools (pliers, wrench, screwdriver)
- Booster cables
- Set of tire chains or traction mats
- Cards, games, puzzles

- Brightly colored cloth to use as a flag
- Canned fruits and nuts
- Non-electric can opener
- Bottled water
- Cell Phone

Plan your route:

- Be familiar with the maps/directions to avoid confusion
- Check the weather reports and adjust starting time
- Let others know how you are coming and when you'll arrive

Protect yourself:

- Buckle up
- Use child safety seats properly
- Never place a rear facing seat in front of an air bag
- The safest place for all children 12 and under is in the back seat
- Sit back at least 10 inches from an air bag

Stopped or stalled:

- Stay with your car
- Don't over exert
- Put a bright marker on antenna/in windows/shine dome light
- Clear exhaust pipe, if you run your car
- Run your car and heater just long enough to remove the chill and open a down wind window slightly for ventilation.

Prevent crashes:

- As always: drugs and alcohol don't mix with driving – it is worse on slippery roads
- Slow down and increase distances between cars
- Keep your eyes open for pedestrians walking in the road
- Get plenty of rest/avoid fatigue
- Stop every three hours
- Rotate drivers
- Keep windows clear, remove snow and ice before you drive
- Get the feel of the roadway---start out very slowly---test your brakes gently.
- Slow gradually before you come to an intersection, turn or stop
- Remember on rain, sleet, snow or ice, your stopping distance will be greater than on dry pavement
- Keep a safe distance between you and other vehicles
- Reduce your speed according to conditions
- Watch for danger spots---remember bridges and overpasses are usually the first areas of the roadways to become hazardous
- If your vehicle begins to skid, turn your wheels in the direction of the skid
- If your vehicle is equipped with anti-lock brakes, DO NOT pump the brakes – The anti-lock braking system does that for you and you can still steer the vehicle
- For vehicles without anti-lock brakes, pumping the brakes will allow you to steer

- Remember, when the roads are covered with a sheet of ice, your vehicle can still move even when the transmission is in park and the parking brake is on
- Heed travel advisories issued by law enforcement and transportation departments
- Be alert to other vehicles on the roadway, especially police, fire, ambulance and DOT vehicles
- Use your seat belt at all times