

Tips for Winter Drivers

Winter is a beautiful and also potentially dangerous time of the year. If you plan on traveling during the winter, it pays to be prepared for the unexpected. Using common sense and developing a few simple driving habits like planning ahead, driving at a safe and legal speed, driving alert and sober and buckling up could ensure that you safely make it to your destination. We've put together the following are some tips to help you stay safe and minimize the potential hazards posed by cold weather, winter storms and icy roads.

Prepare for winter driving before a storm hits:

- Have a mechanic check your car's battery, brakes, fluid levels (antifreeze, windshield washer fluid and oil), as well as the heating and exhaust systems to ensure that your car is in good, safe working condition.
- Try to keep your gas tank full during the winter months. Don't allow the gas to go below half a tank. Not only will this prevent damage from freezing, you'll avoid running out of gas if you're stuck in a traffic jam during the dead of winter.
- Install snow tires or all-weather radials with adequate treads.
- An adequate supply of windshield washing liquid is critical to wash away the mud and melted snow that can severely limit visibility.
- Prepare for an emergency. Keep blankets, flares, a sack of sand for traction, shovel, windshield scraper and brush, tool kit, towrope, booster cables and a flashlight with extra batteries in your trunk. You should also stock your car with material for survival, such as waterproof matches to melt snow for drinking water, a first aid kit, dry clothing and a brightly colored cloth (to tie to the antenna).

When driving under adverse winter conditions

- Take care pulling out of streets blocked by mountains of snow. It's often difficult to see who or what is coming.
- Back your car into the driveway so you have better vision when pulling out.
- Be aware of joggers on the street. Often sidewalks are impassable and die-hard joggers venture onto the street for a clearer path. Unfortunately, they may not see icy spots or other hazards hidden below the slush.
- Don't turn corners too tightly.
- If your car does not have anti-lock brakes and you start skidding on the ice, try not to slam on your brakes. Gently pump your brakes to maintain better control and prevent your wheels from locking.
- If your car does have anti-lock brakes, slam on your brakes when skidding on the ice. Pumping your breaks prevents the anti-lock system from taking over.

Traveling during a severe storm

Travel only if necessary during a blizzard or severe storm. If you must travel:

- Don't travel alone. Notify someone of your estimated time of arrival as well as your primary and alternate travel routes.

- If STUCK, stay in the car and wait for help. Run the engine and heater sparingly. Also make sure your exhaust pipe is clear of snow and ventilate your car so that carbon monoxide fumes won't poison you.
- Keep your energy. Eat food that provides the body with energy for producing its own heat. Replenish your body with fluids to prevent dehydration. Don't eat snow; it will lower your body temperature. Melt it first.