

Winter Driving Safety Tips

What should be included in a winter driving kit:

- Properly fitting tire chains
- Bag of sand or salt (or kitty litter)
- Traction mats
- Snow shovel
- Snow brush
- Ice scraper
- Booster cables
- Warning devices such as flares or emergency lights
- Fuel line de-icer (methanol, also called methyl alcohol or methyl hydrate)
- Extra windshield wiper fluid appropriate for subfreezing temperatures
- Roll of paper towels
- Flashlight and a portable flashing light (and extra batteries)
- Blanket
- Extra clothing, including hat and wind-proof pants, and warm footwear
- First aid kit
- Snack bars or other "emergency" food and water
- Matches and emergency candles - only use with a window opened to prevent build-up of carbon monoxide.
- Road maps.
- "Call Police" or other help signs or brightly colored banners.

How to prepare for winter driving:

Plan your driving in advance.

Avoid driving when fatigued.

- Contact your provincial "Road Reports" to get updates regarding road conditions in the region to which you are going.
- Check weather conditions for your travel route (and time) before you begin driving.
- Plan your arrival time at a destination by taking into account any delays due to slower traffic, reduced visibility, roadblocks, abandoned automobiles, collisions, etc.
- Inform someone of your route and planned arrival time.
- Choose warm and comfortable clothing. If you need to remove outdoor clothing later while driving, STOP the vehicle in a safe spot.
- Warm up your vehicle BEFORE driving off. It reduces moisture condensing on the inside of the windows.
- NEVER warm up your vehicle in a closed garage.
- Remove snow and ice from your vehicle. It helps to see and, equally important, to be seen.
- Wear sunglasses on bright sunny days.
- Bring a cell phone if you have one but do not leave it in the car as the battery will freeze.

How to drive in winter weather:

- Buckle up before you start driving. Keep your seat belt buckled at all times.
- SLOW DOWN! - posted speed limits are for ideal travel conditions. Driving at reduced speeds is the best precautionary measure against any misfortune while driving on slippery roads. "Black ice" is invisible.
- Be alert. Black ice will make a road look like shiny new asphalt. Pavement should look grey-white in winter.
- Do not use cruise control. Winter driving requires you to be in full control at all times.
- Reduce your speed while approaching intersections covered with ice or snow.
- Allow for extra travelling time or even consider delaying a trip if the weather is inclement.
- Drive with low-beam headlights on. Not only are they brighter than daytime running lights but turning them on also activates the tail lights. This makes your vehicle more visible.
- Lengthen your following distance behind the vehicle ahead of you. Stopping distance on an icy road is double that of stopping on a dry one. For example, from around 45 meters (140 ft) at the speed of 60 km/h, to 80 meters (over 260 ft) on an icy road surface.
- Stay in the right-hand lane except when passing and use turn signals when changing lanes.
- Steer with smooth and precise movements. Changing lanes too quickly and jerky steering while braking or accelerating can cause skidding.

How to drive in winter weather cont'd:

- Be aware and slow down when you see a sign warning that you are approaching a bridge. Steel and concrete bridges are likely to be icy even when there is no ice on the asphalt surface, (because bridges over open air cool down faster than roads which tend to be insulated somewhat by solid ground.)
- Consider getting off the road before getting stranded if the weather is worsening.
- Be patient and pass other cars only when it is safe to do so.

What to do if you start to skid:

- Above all DO NOT PANIC!
- Look where you want your vehicle to go and steer in this direction.
- DO NOT BRAKE!
- DO NOT ACCELERATE!
- Disconnect the driving force on the drive wheels by doing either of the following
- If you're using automatic transmission, shift to neutral. However, if you cannot do that immediately, do not touch the transmission gear.
- If you're using manual transmission, declutch.



How to brake on a slippery road:

If the emergency does not require slamming the brakes as hard as possible, squeeze braking (also known as threshold braking) along with declutching (manual shift) or shifting to neutral (automatic transmission) will do the job most efficiently.

Braking without anti-lock brakes

- Use the heel-and-toe method. Keep your heel on the floor and use your toes to press the brake pedal firmly just short of locking up the wheels.
- Release the pressure on the pedal, and press again in the same way.
- Repeat this until you come to a full stop.

Braking with anti-lock brakes

Also use heel-and-toe method, but do not remove your foot from the brake pedal until the vehicle comes to a complete stop.

What to do if you get stuck or stranded in snow:

- Don't panic!
- Avoid over-exertion and over-exposure to the cold. Cold weather can put extra stress on the heart and contribute to the hazards of over-exertion. Sweaty clothes next to the skin are not good insulators against the cold.
- Stay in the car if you cannot shovel your car out of the snow.
- Stay in the car in blizzard conditions - Do not leave the car for assistance unless help is visible within about 90 meters or 100 yards.
- Turn on flashing lights or set up flares. A brightly colored cloth on the radio antenna may make your vehicle more visible in daylight.
- Run the car engine occasionally (about 10 minutes every hour) to provide heat (and to conserve fuel). Ensure that the tail exhaust pipe is free of snow and keep the window opened slightly (on the side shielded from the wind) to prevent the build up of carbon monoxide when the engine is running.
- Bundle up in a blanket. If there is more than one person in the car, share - two people sharing blankets will be warmer than either person alone in a blanket.
- Wear a hat and scarf - the head and neck are major sources of heat loss from the body.
- Monitor for any signs of frostbite and hypothermia.
- Do not fall asleep. If there is more than one person in the car, take turns sleeping.
- Do not stay in one position too long. Do some exercises to help the circulation - move arms and legs, clap your hands, etc.
- Watch for traffic or rescuers.

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