



# WINTER DRIVING SAFETY TIPS



Vehicle operators often face treacherous driving conditions during the winter season. You have a choice to drive in inclement conditions, choose an alternate means of travel, or stay put until conditions improve. If you choose to drive in less than desirable conditions, you must know the inherent risks involved and have a plan to mitigate those risks. Safe winter driving depends on achieving and maintaining optimum visibility and vehicle handling. The following Safety Tips are provided to assist in identifying winter driving hazards:

## WINTER DRIVING SAFETY TIPS:

- **VEHICLE PREPARATION:** Ensure your vehicle is maintained in peak condition. Inspect tires (including the spare) regularly, and before any long-distance travel for proper air pressure. Keep windshield clean and ensure washer fluid reservoir is kept full. Verify wipers and defrosters work, and keep head and tail lights clean and clear of snow and ice. While driving, use headlights to enhance visibility to see, and be seen. Use the radio to monitor temperature and local road conditions. Stay vigilant to bridges and overpasses freezing before roadways. Monitor the gas tank level and keep it at least half full. Ensure someone is aware of your destination, route, and anticipated arrival time.
- **WINTER DRIVING:** If possible, avoid driving in snow or icy conditions. If driving is required drive defensively and wear seatbelts. Reduce speed, increase following distance, and avoid using cruise control. Know the type of braking system installed - as this will enhance braking. If driving a standard vehicle, use lower gears for better traction, especially on hills. Remain attentive for fast moving or out of control vehicles. Communicate your intentions well in advance when turning or changing lanes. Avoid any distractions that deter focus from safe driving. Avoid passing sand/salt trucks. If driving long distances, ensure weather conditions are monitored along route, and at destination. If driving rental vehicles, familiarize yourself with controls and handling characteristics. Have a back-up plan in case conditions worsen.
- **EMERGENCY SITUATIONS:** One of the most hazardous elements of winter driving involves icy conditions, particularly black ice – which is nearly impossible to detect until it's too late. When vehicles become out of control on icy roads, avoid the instinct to slam on the brakes. Instead, stay calm and ease off the pedals. Continue to look and steer in the direction you want your vehicle to go, until able to regain control. Should your vehicle break down or be involved in a crash, remain in your vehicle and call for assistance. Prepare for the unexpected by keeping a winter emergency kit in your vehicle. Include a shovel, sand or kitty litter (for traction), flashlight with extra batteries, ice scraper, first aid kit, medicines, jumper cables, phone and charger, water, non-perishable food, blankets, gloves, and warm clothes.

## ADDITIONAL SAFETY RESOURCES:

- National Highway Traffic Safety Administration: <http://www.nhtsa.gov/Driving+Safety>