

Winter Driving Tips

Lines of Business: General Liability, Auto Liability, Auto Property Damage and Workers Compensation

Risk Control Strategy/Key Issues: To reduce the potential for vehicle collisions, related losses to equipment, personal, and or products under transport.

Introduction:

Driving an organization's work vehicle in the wintertime is a lot different than driving the same vehicle in the summer. The road conditions are different. Cold temperatures can effect vehicle equipment and parts differently than do warm temperatures. These temperatures also affect the road surface. Frost heaves develop as the winter progresses. These frost heaves can change handling characteristics of your truck or other vehicle, increasing your stopping distance and or increasing the potential for rollover. Drivers also need to be prepared to take care of themselves in winter driving. They should be dressed accordingly with gloves, hat, warm boots and dry socks. If a driver is not comfortable it could adversely affect their driving abilities. Below are elements to review with your drivers upon the onset of winter driving and during the winter.

Suggested Winter Driving Elements to review with your drivers:

The obvious:

- Anticipate road conditions and hazards. Be prepared to take action at all times.
- Ensure that your equipment is in good to excellent condition.
 - Check for proper tire pressure weekly – changes in temperature affect tire pressure (1 psi for every 9⁰F).
 - Replace tires that are worn or have insufficient tread for winter conditions.
 - Top-off all fluids at least weekly. Check the temperature rating of the antifreeze.
 - Check the wheels for balance and alignment.
 - Check the heater, defroster, radiator, hoses, exhaust system, battery, belts, and wipers.
 - Keep the windshield and mirrors free of ice, dirt, and salt spray.
 - Test all lights; walk around the entire vehicle.
- Keep cold weather gloves, a shovel, and a bag of sand, flares, a flashlight, booster cables, a windshield scraper, and warm clothing in the vehicle.
- When in a skid, apply full and constant pressure to the brakes if the vehicle is equipped with an anti-lock braking system (ABS). Pump the brakes if the truck doesn't have an ABS.
- If the rear end is skidding, turn the front wheels in the direction of the skid.
- Slow down. Drive according to road conditions. Stay alert.
- Keep more distance between your vehicle and the vehicle ahead of you. You need more stopping room when roads are slippery. Keep out of groups of vehicles.

The Not So Obvious:

- Reduce speed more than normal on exits and curves. They are likely to be much more slippery than the straight road.
- Watch for spray from the vehicle in front of you. If the surface of the road looks wet but there is no spray, chances are that there is black ice on the road. Slow down.
- Stay off the shoulder of the road unless it is paved. Dirt shoulders are likely to be wet and soft, or covered in several inches of snow and ice. You can lose control of the vehicle if one or more wheels go off the pavement. Loaded tankers are top heavy; they can rollover.
- Avoid distractions, such as mobile or cell phones, checking delivery tickets, map reading, eating or drinking while driving in hazardous conditions.
- Do not drive in blizzard conditions or in heavy fog or wind if possible.
- Avoid carbon monoxide poisoning; do not run the vehicle with the exhaust pipe in a snow bank.
- Use a low gear on hills, curves, exits, or slippery surfaces.
- Stay in the right lane unless passing. Change lanes cautiously and smoothly.
- If possible stay off the customer's driveway as you may damage it.
- Be careful getting in and out of the truck. Ice can be treacherous on the human body.

Practice driving the vehicle in both snow and ice conditions, in a safe location, preferably off the highway. Give yourself plenty of room during the exercise for maneuvering. Learn how the vehicle reacts to acceleration, braking, hills, and turns.

Be alert and patient. In an emergency, stay calm and focused. Avoid overexertion.

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