

## Winter Driving Tips

### Introduction:

Driving a 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 vehicle, thus 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 properly for winter weather, which should include gloves, a hat, warm boots and dry socks. If a driver is not comfortable, it could adversely affect his or her driving abilities. Below are elements to review with your drivers upon the onset of winter driving and during the winter.

### The obvious:

- Anticipate road conditions and hazards. Be prepared to take action at all times. Watch weather reports and look for road condition reports before you leave. If there is a winter road ban or traffic warning, delay your trip until conditions improve.
- Plan your trip and route to avoid steep uphill and downhill grades, or sharp curves known for poor conditions in bad weather.
- Leave early and expect the trip to take much longer than on good weather days.
- In poor weather conditions, the posted speed limit is nearly always too fast. Reduce your speed.
- 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 9<sup>0</sup>F).
  - 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 tires are 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 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.
- Avoid distractions, such as 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 if possible.
- If you are forced to pull off the road and wait out the storm in your vehicle, avoid carbon monoxide poisoning; do not run the vehicle with the exhaust pipe in a snow bank. Conserve fuel by running the engine for fifteen minutes at a time. Crack a window to ensure fresh air is present.
- Use a low gear on hills, curves, exits, or slippery surfaces.
- Stay in the right lane unless passing. Change lanes cautiously and smoothly.
- Be careful getting in and out of the vehicle. Always use three points of contact.

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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