



Winter Driving Hints

For children, winter driving conjures up images of trips to the toboggan run, post-holiday shopping, and visits with friends and relatives. For adults, winter driving stirs up different visions – snow, sleet, ice, skidding and digging the car out. However, through careful planning and some gold old-fashioned common sense, anyone can ease the uncertainty of potentially dangerous travel conditions and reduce transportation accidents and fatalities so both children and adults can safely enjoy the winter season.

Avoid procrastination. Winter preparation of your car should begin before the first snowfall. Get a tune-up. Check the brakes, exhaust system, and make sure the front and back wipers, heater, defroster and rear window defogger are all in good working order.

Inclement weather can turn a normal trip into a driver's worst nightmare. Winter drivers will benefit from stocking up with a snow shovel, ice scraper, sand, and kitty litter, and keeping them in the trunk.

All-weather tires will perform well under most conditions, but you should buy winter tires if you expect to be on the road daily. Stow warning devices such as flares and folding reflective triangles, jumper cables (include goggles to use when jump starting your battery), gloves, a first aid kit, one or two water bottles, and windshield wiper fluid in your vehicle. A working flashlight, blanket, old clothing to protect what you are wearing during repairs, duct tape for temporary patch-up jobs, maps, matches and nonperishable food items like high-energy trail mix or granola bars round out a basic supply list.

The first question to ask yourself before driving in bad weather is, "Is this trip necessary?"

Anticipating problems before they arise should aid drivers in maintaining control of their vehicle. This is important because winter driving requires an adjustment for every driver and makes accelerating, braking, and turning more challenging due to the weather conditions. Thus, poor road conditions require better judgment, patience, and often adjusting to slow speeds. You do not need to drive at the limit.

If you do get stuck in drifting snow, keep the snow and ice from blocking your exhaust pipe. Lower your window slightly to avoid asphyxiating carbon monoxide fumes from entering your vehicle. Run the engine and heater about 10 minutes per hour. Adjust this accordingly depending on the level in your gas tank. Don't leave the car unless you know your exact location and the time and distance required to get help.

Finally, check weather and traffic reports prior to and during your trip. Be patient, flexible and adaptable. Salespeople or those taking long trips should leave a travel itinerary with colleagues, family or friends with anticipated arrival and check-in times. By respecting Mother Nature, maybe you'll enjoy the snow and ice as much as you did when you were a child thinking about toboggan runs, a trip to the store, or a visit to friends or relatives.

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