

Winter Driving Safety



When winter weather strikes, you may face challenges as you get behind the wheel. Snow, slush or icy roads are involved in nearly one in four weather-related vehicle crashes. These conditions can make it harder for you to see, slow down and stop – all factors that can increase the chances of an accident.

Changing weather conditions create different hazards throughout the winter. A single journey may take you into diverse weather, road and traffic conditions, so you need to be prepared for each one.

Advanced preparations can help make a trip safer, or help you deal with an emergency, should it arise.

The three P's of Safe Winter Driving: **PREPARE** your vehicle; **PROTECT** yourself; and **PREVENT** crashes on the road.

PREPARE your vehicle by checking the following:

- Lights are clean and working.
- Battery is fully charged.
- Tire condition, tread depth and pressure (of all the tires, including the spare).
- Brakes are working well.

- Keep your gas tank at least half full to avoid gas line freeze-up.
- Fluids are kept topped up, especially windshield wiper fluid (to the correct concentration to prevent it freezing), anti-freeze and oil.
- Run the defroster to remove condensation and frost from the windshield and side windows.
- Never warm up a vehicle in an enclosed area as you can run the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning.

PROTECT yourself and passengers

- Always wear your seatbelt.
- Use child safety seats properly. Never place a rear-facing infant seat in front of an air bag.
- Children 12 and under are much safer in the back seat.
- Have an Emergency Kit in your vehicle to include: flashlight, water, blankets etc.

PREVENT crashes

- Slow down and increase distances between cars. You may need up to **TEN TIMES** the normal distance for braking in adverse weather.

- Avoid fatigue. Get plenty of rest before the trip, stop at least every three hours, and rotate drivers if possible.
- Avoid using your parking brake while driving in cold, rainy and snowy weather. This would cause your tires to lock and your car to slide.
- Do not use cruise control when driving on slippery roads.
- If your car starts to skid, always point your front tires in the direction you want to go.

When driving on snow or ice, accelerate and decelerate slowly; this will allow your tires to retain traction. If you start to skid or slide, apply the gas slowly to regain traction.

When driving in rain, remember that rain reduces your ability to see and greatly increases the distance required to slow down and stop.

Avoid driving in fog unless your journey is necessary. Fog is one of the most dangerous weather conditions. An accident involving one vehicle can quickly involve many others, especially if they are driving too close to one another.

When driving in strong winds hold on tight to the steering wheel, a strong gust can snatch the steering wheel from you if you are not paying attention. Avoid bridges wherever possible. Be on the lookout for hazards such as fallen branches, power lines etc.

Remember, driving in winter weather can be challenging, even for experienced drivers. Slowing down, allowing increased time to come to a stop, wearing your seatbelt, devoting your full attention to the road and being aware of changing conditions can help you drive more safely. If your travel route takes you into remote areas with limited cell phone coverage, consider informing a third party of your travel plans that include your route and when you plan to arrive. This way, if you are overdue, first responders will know where to start looking. If you're unsure whether it is safe to drive, consider waiting until the roads improve.