



Driving Safely in Winter Months

The leading cause of death during winter storms is transportation accidents. Many accidents could be avoided if drivers took the time to learn and practice these tips for driving safely during snowy and icy conditions.

3 Major Safety Issues that you should be aware of during winter driving are...

Black Ice. Black ice is ice which forms on a roadway, usually due to snow melting and re-freezing. Since it is almost invisible, drivers fail to recognize black ice conditions and may drive at normal speeds-often resulting in very serious accidents. Always be alert to the possibility to black ice when temperatures are near or below freezing. Pavement that looks dry but appears darker in color and dull-looking should alert you to the presence of black ice.

Braking. Failing to allow enough time to stop is a major cause of winter driving accidents. During slippery conditions, stopping distances can triple. Driving at a slower speed, anticipating stops at traffic lights and intersections, and applying brakes sooner than normal will help ensure accident-free stops. When braking, brake carefully with short, rapid application of the brakes. Always allow plenty of extra space between you and other vehicles to minimize the need for quick stops.

Acceleration. Acceleration, turning and passing also presents dangers during winter. Accelerate slowly to avoid loss of traction and subsequent loss of control. Turn slowly, with caution, to avoid sliding into stationary objects of the path of an oncoming vehicle. Avoid sudden movements. Pass with care because passing lanes are not maintained as well as driving lanes. Again, leave extra space between yourself and other vehicles so there's no room to maneuver in case something goes wrong. During a skid, steer cautiously in the direction you want the car to go.

Here are some additional tips you should remember for driving safely in winter:

- Always use your seat belt.
- Turn on your headlights during adverse weather conditions. Overcast skies and falling snow limit visibility. It is important to see and be seen.
- Like all the signs say, bridges and overpasses freeze before the roadway. Use extra caution on these.
- Remember that driving in winter weather conditions causes physical and mental fatigue and reduces reaction time. Get plenty of rest and adequate nutrition. Don't drive while you're sleepy or on medication that causes drowsiness.
- Prepare your vehicle ahead of time. Check fluid levels, tire pressure, lights, and the battery. Have a mechanic give your vehicle a winter check-up and make any necessary repairs.
- Stock an emergency kit containing heavy clothes, and a blanket, traction material such as sand or kitty litter, tire chains, a small shovel, first aid kit, flashlight, jumper cables, and a bright cloth to use as a flag.

Did You Know ...

A woman had an accident several weeks ago and totaled her car. It was raining, though not excessively, when her car suddenly began to hydroplane and literally flew through the air. When she explained to the highway patrolman what had happened, he told her something that every driver should know. Never drive in the rain with your cruise control on. She had thought she was being cautious by setting the cruise control and maintaining a safe consistent speed in the rain.

However, if the cruise control is on and your car begins to hydroplane (when your tires lose contact with the pavement), your car will accelerate to a higher rate of speed and you take off like an airplane.

The patrolman also said that you should never use the cruise control when the pavement is wet or icy. We tell our teenagers to set the cruise control and drive at a safe speed, but we don't tell them to use the cruise control only when the pavement is dry. In some vehicles, when the windshield wipers are on, you cannot set the cruise control.