Winter Driving Meeting Kit

WHAT'S AT STAKE

Snow and ice make even the most routine drive dangerous. Before winter weather arrives, make sure your vehicle is in good condition, keep in mind how you and your vehicle may be affected by the elements and be prepared for emergency situations.

WHAT'S THE DANGER

MAJOR HAZARDS OF WINTER DRIVING

1. **Poor traction –** Being unable to pull away from a standstill on an icy road, to go up slippery hills or to negotiate deep snow can cause trouble ranging from aggravating delays because of burnt tires to major traffic tie-ups and collisions.
2. **Reduced ability to stop –** Test studies indicate that the heavier the vehicle the greater the stopping distance. Under severe winter conditions this gap widens accordingly. Gearing down of the vehicle also assists in bringing it to a safe stop.
3. **The effect of temperature on starting and stopping –** Temperature plays an important part in braking distance and traction on ice and snow. As the temperature rises, ice becomes much more slippery. Your braking distance can double with a temperature variation from -18ºC to around 0ºC. It is important, when driving in winter weather, to periodically get the feel of the road. This should be done only at a slow speed.
4. **Ice and snow made slippery by traffic –** The action of tires spinning and sliding on snow and ice greatly decreases traction on already hazardous road surfaces. This happens mainly at intersections, on curves and on hills. This polishing of the road surface increases braking distances, slows traffic and presents a severe hazard at intersections.

5. **Reduced ability to see and be seen –** Driving without completely clearing your windows invites disaster. Before starting your trip, clean off the entire windshield and all windows. Wipe off the headlights, brake and tail lights and turn signals so that others may see you. This may be necessary several times during a heavy storm.
6. **Wipers blades and arms.** If new blades are installed, they can be inefficient if arm pressure is inadequate.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

WINTER DRIVING PRECAUTIONS – VEHICLE PREPARATION

- Test your battery, battery power drops as the temperature drops.
- Make sure the cooling system is in good working order.
- Have winter tires with a deeper, more flexible tread put on your car.
- If using all-season tires, check the tread and replace if less than 2/32 of an inch.
- Check the tire pressure; tire pressure drops as the temperature drops.
- Check your wiper blades and replace if needed.
- Add wiper fluid rated for -30 degrees.
- Keep your gas tank at least half full to avoid gas line freeze.
- Always carry tire chains. Make sure they are the correct size for the vehicle.
- Carry sand for traction – keep some in the vehicle. Floor mats may be used as an expedient measure.
- Make sure the vehicle is in proper working order.
- Have a charged mobile phone, in case the driver gets stranded.
- Make sure the vehicle has a full tank of gas. Don’t wait for it to reach empty before filling up again.
- Bring emergency or repair equipment, including flashlights, flares, and a fire extinguisher.
- Carry blankets, warm clothing, and water in case the vehicle breaks down in cold or stormy conditions.

BEST DRIVE PRACTICES IN SNOW CONDITIONS

- **Stay home.** Only go out if necessary. Even if you can drive well in bad weather, it's better to avoid taking unnecessary risks by venturing out.
- **Drive slowly. A**lways adjust your speed down to account for lower traction when driving on snow or ice.
- **Accelerate and decelerate slowly.** Apply the gas slowly to regain traction and avoid skids. Don't try to get moving in a hurry and take time to slow down for a stoplight. Remember: It takes longer to slow down on icy roads.
- **Increase your following distance to five to six seconds.** This increased margin of safety will provide the longer distance needed if you have to stop.
- **Know your brakes.** Whether you have antilock brakes or not, keep the heel of your foot on the floor and use the ball of your foot to apply firm, steady pressure on the brake pedal.
- **Don't stop if you can avoid it.** There's a big difference in the amount of inertia it takes to start moving from a full stop versus how much it takes to get moving while still rolling. If you can slow down enough to keep rolling until a traffic light changes, do it.
- **Don't power up hills.** Applying extra gas on snow-covered roads will just make your wheels spin. Try to get a little inertia going before you reach the hill and let that inertia carry you to the top. As you reach the crest of the hill, reduce your speed, and proceed downhill slowly.
- **Don't stop going up a hill.** There's nothing worse than trying to get moving up a hill on an icy road. Get some inertia going on a flat roadway before you take on the hill.

STUCK IN SNOW – WHAT TO DO

- **Stay with your vehicle:** Your vehicle provides temporary shelter and makes it easier for rescuers to locate you. Do not try to walk in a severe storm.
- **Don't over exert yourself:** When digging out your vehicle, listen to your body and stop if you become tired.
- **Be Visible:** Tie a brightly colored cloth to the antenna of

your vehicle or place a cloth at the top of a rolled-up window to signal distress.

- **Clear the Exhaust Pipe:** A blocked exhaust pipe can cause deadly carbon monoxide gas to leak into the passenger compartment of the vehicle while the engine is running.
- **Stay Warm:** Use whatever is available to insulate your body from the cold. This could include floor mats, newspapers, or paper maps.
- **Conserve Fuel:** If possible, only run the engine and heater long enough to remove the chill.

FINAL WORD

The best way to avoid an accident during the winter months is to avoid driving in dangerous conditions. If you absolutely have to drive in bad weather conditions travel main roads that have already been plowed and salted.