



# 12 Safety Tips for Winter Driving

**You've probably heard many of these tips before but, when it comes to safety; a few more reminders can't hurt:**

## #1 Be Prepared.

You have to get ready for what you may encounter and you may say this is common sense, and it is. But how many of us jump in our vehicle when the weather looks nice and end up in a storm? We suggest:

- Proper clothing (loose layers, extra gloves, rain gear)
- A flashlight w/ new batteries in the glove box
- A blanket, food, and water
- A bag of sand or salt and extra washer fluid
- A windshield scraper
- Jumper cables
- Small shovel
- Tire chains or traction mats
- Have at least a half tank of gas at all times during the winter season
- Plan long trips carefully - what weather conditions may you encounter?

## #2 Complete a Pre-Trip Inspection.

Drivers should inspect their vehicles before every trip. Perform a visual, hands-on inspection and check all important items, including the battery, tires, wiper blades and fluid, lights, and tires. Check your vehicle often. Have a mechanic check it at the start of the winter season. Check the pressure in your spare tire on a regular basis.

## #3 Slow down.

Many accidents occur during the winter because drivers are going too fast for conditions. A slower speed gives you more time to react if something occurs. Extra patience and care for other drivers can go a long way this time of year.

## #4 Give yourself extra space.

Allow for more room between yourself and other vehicles. You should always have enough space and time to move out of harm's way.

## #5 Hold your steering wheel firmly.

Sudden, sharp moves can quickly cause you to lose control of your vehicle. Stay steady through ruts in the road, heavy wind, and on ice.

## #6 Brake and accelerate lightly.

Try not to do anything forcefully in bad weather. When you need to slow down quickly in slippery conditions, try lightly pumping your brakes. This reduces your chance of locking your tires and spinning out of control.

If your vehicle has ABS brakes, it is recommended that you hold the brake down as far as possible in an emergency. The ABS system prevents the wheels from locking enabling you to steer around obstacles.

## #7 Watch for black ice.

This is a very dangerous condition. Black ice is a thin layer of transparent ice that forms when the temperature is around the freezing point. It sometimes makes the road look slightly wet. This can sneak up on you so, when the temperature gets close to freezing, look for clues:

- ice build-up on my mirror arms, antenna, or the top corners of the windshield
- when the spray from tires on vehicles in front of you stops

## #8 Use extra caution when approaching bridges.

Elevated structures like bridges and highway overpasses usually freeze first and many are not treated with ice/snow melt materials (salt, sand) like the rest of the road. Many vehicles traveling fine on the highway, but as soon as they get on a bridge they spin out of control. Black ice is often found on bridges.

## #9 Mountain driving is often hazardous.

Mountain weather can be severe in winter and can change rapidly. Be ready for wind gusts and stay aware of emergency vehicles and snowplows. If at all

possible, do not stop in avalanche zones. Obey posted rules. Tire chains may be required for certain routes.

**#10 Obey all road signs.**

A simple, yet effective tip. Safety authorities post this information for a reason. Many drivers get into trouble just by ignoring a sign.

**#11 If stranded or stuck, stay in your vehicle.**

If you get stuck in a bad storm or blizzard and you can't see a close place to seek assistance, stay put! It's easy to get confused in a bad storm and you may get lost. This is a time to use those supplies mentioned in tip #1. You should also keep moving to stay warm. And to avoid carbon monoxide poisoning, keep the exhaust pipe clear of snow and open a downwind window slightly for ventilation. Only run your engine for ten minutes each hour.

**#12 If conditions look bad get off the road.**

Don't push your luck. Use your best judgment. Listen to weather reports and warnings and react appropriately. This tip can help you avoid having to use tip #11.

**Keep Safe!!!**

Brought to you by the **West Paterson Volunteer Fire Department**

