

WINTER DRIVING

The best advice for winter driving is to stay home until snow removal crews have the chance to do their job. However, by following a few tips, drivers can become safer despite winter's adverse weather conditions.

PREPARING THE VEHICLE

The wet and cold weather associated with winter can present challenges to a vehicle's operating efficiency and leave motorists stranded. The best preparation involves a complete vehicle checkup in the fall. The electrical system, brakes, tires, exhaust, and windshield wipers are all critical components to a vehicle that can cause significant problems during the winter if in bad condition.

Windshields should be completely cleared of ice and snow before driving. Clearing out a small 'portal' on the front windshield can place a driver at risk because of the significant reduction in their peripheral vision. Always

check that wipers are turned off before starting a vehicle with snow and ice on the windshield. If not, wiper blades or the wiper motor can be damaged.



The entire vehicle should be cleared of snow to avoid the risk of snow shifting from the roof onto front or rear glass. Also, leaving snow on a vehicle decreases the visibility of the vehicle as the car can blend in with the snowy surroundings.

STARTING OUT IN SNOW

Clear a path in front of the vehicle for several feet. To minimize rolling resistance, start with the wheels pointed straight ahead if possible. Apply gentle pressure to the accelerator and ease forward. If you apply too much accelerator, the wheels may begin to spin and dig deeper into the snow. If additional traction is needed, use traction mats or spread sand or another abrasive material both in front of and behind each wheel.

FOLLOWING DISTANCES

Increase following distances to at least eight seconds when driving on slippery surfaces. This will provide a greater distance for stopping thus increasing your safety margin. Try to stay in lanes that have

been recently cleared of snow when possible.

Changing lanes across any built-up snow between lanes can cause a loss of control.



When approaching a hill, watch traffic ahead and increase following distance. Should a vehicle ahead become stuck, you may have enough room to safely increase your speed and drive around it. Once at the crest of a hill, reduce speed and minimize braking on very slippery hills. If necessary, downshift to a lower gear to keep the speed down. Too much braking while traveling downhill can cause loss of control.

STEERING

Snow and ice can make steering difficult and require smooth, precise movements of the steering wheel. If the front or rear of the vehicle begins to slide laterally, it is usually caused by hard accelera-

tion or braking, going too fast into a curve, or quick jerky movements of the steering wheel. Smooth, precise steering minimizes any loss of traction between the tires and slick surface.

SKIDDING

There are two types of skids that occur on snow and ice;

rear-wheel skids and front-wheel skids. In



either skid,

the most important, and difficult, step is to remain calm. Jerking the steering wheel or slamming the brakes is the typical response, but will lead to a further loss of control.

In either skid, continue to look in the path you want to go, it is human nature to drive in the direction we are looking. Gently steer in the direction you want the front of the vehicle to go and avoid slamming the brakes.

In a rear-wheel skid, continue to steer in the direction you want to travel once the rear wheels stop skidding to avoid a skid in the opposite direction.

In a front-wheel skid, wait for the front wheels to regain traction then steer in the direction you wish to travel.

Driving in snow and ice can certainly be challenging but by following these safe techniques, the risk of being involved in a crash can be lessened.