

The winter months can be a curse to drivers as they face conditions that are far different from those they encounter during the summer. Keep in mind that winter storms are not the only cause for winter driving hazards. Even on a bright and sunny winter day, driving hazards may be lurking just beneath the treads. The following winter driving tips should be used in conjunction with your daily vehicle check to help keep your fleet on the road and your drivers arriving safely at their destination.

See and Be Seen

Keep a snow brush or scraper in each vehicle. Clean all of the snow and ice off of the windshield, other windows, outside mirrors, lights, and reflectors. Make sure the vehicle is equipped with good wiper blades and that wiper arms are exerting enough pressure on the blades to ensure a clean sweep. If moisture or ice builds up on the inside or outside of the windshield, stop the vehicle in a safe place and clean it off.

Use Proper Lights

Keep headlights clean; dirty headlights can greatly reduce visibility at night. Grime on headlight lenses can reduce their effectiveness by as much as 90%! Never drive with parking lights in place of headlights in winter's early dusk and during times with poor visibility.

Check Your Tires

Tires with good, deep treads are essential for effective cornering and handling on slippery roads. Check the air pressure frequently to maintain the manufacturer's recommended pressure.

Clear the Exhaust Pipe

Check the exhaust pipe to make sure it is clear. Snow and ice can become compacted in the exhaust pipe causing blockage. A blocked pipe can cause a leakage of carbon monoxide gas into the cab when the engine is running, which can be fatal.

Forget the Cruise Control

Do not activate the cruise control when driving on a potentially slippery surface (ex. wet, icy, snow covered, sandy).

Keep the Gas Tank Filled

Stormy weather or traffic delays may force you to change routes or turn back making a short trip unexpectedly long.

Be Prepared

In case the vehicle breaks down or slides off the road, have the following items on hand: a charged cell phone, working flashlight, shovel, and ice scraper. For longer trips, have blankets, any critical medications, and a supply of water and food. When stranded, stay with the vehicle, make sure the exhaust pipe is clear, only run the vehicle as much as necessary, and place a bright marker on the antenna.

Plan Extra Time for Your Trip

When planning routes, allow enough time to arrive safely at the destination. Trips can take longer during the winter than at other times of the year, especially during stormy conditions or when roads are icy.

Create a Safety Zone

Drive slowly. Accelerating, stopping, and turning all take longer on snow covered, wet, or icy roads. Leave more distance than usual between your vehicle and the vehicle ahead of you, allowing at least 10 seconds of space to come to a complete stop. Cars usually need at least three seconds to halt completely when traveling on dry pavement, but slick conditions make it harder to stop. Heavy trucks need even more space.

Be Alert for Hidden Hazardous Conditions

Shaded spots, bridges, overpasses, and intersections are areas where ice is likely to form first or be the most slippery when other areas are not. Keep in mind that the stopping distance required on ice at 0°F is twice the amount required at 32°F!

Wear a Seat Belt

Regardless of the road conditions, seat belts should always be worn when operating or riding in a vehicle.

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