

# Safety Newsletter

October, 2013

## This Month's Topic: Fall & Winter Driving Safety Tips

**F**all and winter driving can be unpredictable because of weather changes and the end of daylight saving time. As leaves begin to fall, wet leaves on the roadway can be as slippery as ice. They also can obscure traffic lines and other pavement markings, making driving in unfamiliar areas particularly difficult.

Winter driving can be hazardous and scary, especially in northern regions that get a lot of snow and ice. While most workers can stay inside during a winter storm, some workers may be required to go into the storm. These may include utility workers, law enforcement personnel, emergency medical personnel, highway personnel, and sanitation workers.

### Fall & Winter Driving Safety Tips

**Be Prepared.** Trips to the mountains can take longer during winter, especially if you encounter storm conditions or icy roads. Get an early start and allow plenty of time to get to your destination.

**Keep Your Tank Full.** It may be necessary to change routes or turn back during a bad storm. You may also be in for a long delay if bad weather forces a highway closure.

**Slow Down And Buckle Up For Safety.** Highway speeds of 55 or 65 miles-per-hour may be possible in good weather but not during bad. Excessive speed is an invitation for trouble on snow or ice. Stopping distances are longer so make sure you leave plenty of space between you and the vehicles ahead. Power your vehicle down hills, use lower gears - not brakes - to control and maintain your speed. Avoid sudden stops and direction changes and remember that bridge decks and shady areas can be icy when other areas are not. Most accidents involve motorists who drive too fast for the conditions.

**Do Not Use Your Cruise Control** when driving in snow or other slippery conditions.

**Don't Panic.** If you find yourself beginning to slide on snow or ice, take your foot off the gas and do not hit your brakes. Steer the front of your vehicle in the direction you wish to travel. If you must use the brakes, do not allow them to lock up by gently pumping the brake pedal. Most vehicles are now equipped with anti-lock (ABS) brakes. If your car has them, apply firm, steady pressure without pumping. The grinding noise you hear and the surging you feel in the pedal is normal and indicates that your anti-lock brakes are working properly, allowing you to maintain control of your vehicle while coming to a stop.

**Watch For Black Ice!** Many people get into trouble by assuming the roads will not be slippery unless the temperature is freezing or below. Ice can form on road surfaces anytime the air temperature drops below 40 degrees, especially when it's windy. Bridges and underpasses can be especially hazardous. However, these are not the only locations that "black ice" can form. Any low or shaded area surrounded by landscape or with nearby source of water, can have icy spots. Late night and early morning hours are especially dangerous since moisture has had a chance to accumulate.

**Be More Observant.** Visibility is often limited during poor weather. Slow down and keep a constant watch for other vehicles and snow removal equipment. Even vehicles marked with bright orange paint and equipped with flashing lights are hard to see when there is poor visibility. If you are following snow removal equipment, maintain a safe distance and watch for chunks of ice and other debris.

**Keep Windshield And Windows Clear.** Utilize your vehicle's defrosters and wipers to keep your windshield clear. Passing vehicles can also spray your car with mud and slush. Use your windshield washer accessory to keep your windshield clean.

**If You Stall, Pull Over And Stay With Your Vehicle.** Put your flashers on, stay warm and conserve fuel. If you keep your vehicle running, make sure your exhaust pipe is clear so carbon monoxide fumes don't accumulate.

### The 3 P's of Safe Winter Driving:

- **PREPARE** for the trip
- **PROTECT** yourself
- **PREVENT** crashes on the road

#### **PREPARE**

- **Maintain Your Car:** Check battery, tire tread, and windshield wipers, keep your windows clear, put no-freeze fluid in the washer reservoir, and check your antifreeze.
- **Have On Hand:** flashlight, jumper cables, abrasive material, shovel, snow brush and ice scraper, warning devices (like flares) and blankets. For long trips, add food and water, medication and cell phone.
- **Plan Your Route:** Allow plenty of time (check the weather and leave early if necessary), be familiar with the maps/ directions, and let others know your route and arrival time.

#### **PROTECT YOURSELF**

- Buckle up and use child safety seats properly
- Never place a rear-facing infant seat in front of an air bag
- Children 12 and under are much safer in the back seat

#### **PREVENT CRASHES**

- Drugs and alcohol never mix with driving
- Slow down and increase distances between cars
- Keep your eyes open for pedestrians walking in the road
- Avoid fatigue – Get plenty of rest before the trip, stop at least every three hours, and rotate drivers if possible
- If you are planning to drink, designate a sober driver



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### Winterize Your Vehicle

Before heading to snow country, make sure your vehicle is in good running condition. Check your brakes, windshield wipers, exhaust system and heater. Make sure they are in top condition.

**Check Your Antifreeze.** Make sure it's properly filled and formulated for winter conditions.

**Check Your Tires.** Make sure they are inflated to the proper pressure and the tread is in good condition.

**Replace Your Wiper Blades and Fill Your Windshield Wiper Reservoir.** Install a set of new wiper blades and fill your wiper reservoir. A winter formula is available help de-ice your windshield. Some vehicles are also equipped with rear wipers. Make sure the wiper blades are in good condition and the reservoir is filled.

**Check Your Chains.** Make sure they are the proper size for your tires. Check the links and fasteners and make sure they are in good working order. Make sure you know if your vehicle has front or rear wheel drive.

### Chain Controls

R1: Chains or snow tread tires required. Snow tires must have a tread depth of 6/32" with an "M&S" imprint on the tire's sidewall.

R2: Chains are required on all vehicles except four wheel drives or all-wheel drives with snow tread tires on all four wheels.

R3: Chains are required - all vehicles with no exceptions!

R1 and R2 are the most common chain controls. The highway will usually be closed before an R-3 control is imposed.

**During Bad Weather, You Must Carry Chains.** All vehicles (including four-wheel drive and vehicles with snow tires) must carry chains when traveling during snowy weather. If you don't have chains in your possession, you may not be allowed to proceed.

**You Must Stop And Put On Chains When Highway Signs Indicate Chains Are Required.** You can be cited by the California Highway Patrol and fined if you don't. You will usually have about a mile between "Chains Required" signs and the final checkpoint. Make sure you pull safely off the roadway to fasten your chains. Do not stop in a traffic lane where you can endanger yourself or others. Chain control areas change rapidly from place to place depending on current weather and road conditions.

**The Speed Limit When Chains Are Required Is 25-30 Miles Per Hour.** Speed limits are posted at various locations and enforced by radar.

**When Removing Chains, Drive Beyond The Signs Reading "End Chain Control".** Pull well off to the right where you can safely remove and store your chains for later use.

Other fall hazards for motorists can be fog and sun glare. When driving in fog, motorists should use low beam headlights since the high beam setting creates glare and reduces visibility. Motorists should slow down and use extra caution on leaf-covered roadways. Additional preparations can help make a trip safer and help motorists deal with an emergency.

*"An accident (through rushing) will cause your work more delays than slowing down and preparing for the wet weather."*

**Matthew Whitaker**

*Corrosion Technical Support and Computer Support,  
Alisto Engineering Group, Inc.*

### Winter Travel Kit

Winter weather is never predictable. Expect the worst conditions. Prepare an emergency kit for your car that would include:

**Flashlight** - carry extra batteries

**Warm Blankets and Extra Clothing** - you may be forced to pull over during bad conditions and wait for weather to improve

**Water and Snacks**- if there is a long delay, you'll be glad you have them  
**Clean Towel** - to dry your hands after installing snow chains

**Ice Scraper** - to keep your windows clear of snow and ice

**Shovel** - to free your vehicle if it gets snowed in

**Small Broom or Brush** - to clear the snow off your vehicle

**Spare Key** - many motorists have locked themselves out when they've stopped to put on chains

**Sand or Kitty Litter** - if you should get stuck, you can place it down for extra traction

### References:

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