



Risk Control Services Bulletin

Safe Winter Driving

Winter is the most difficult driving season and it can be a challenge for even the most experienced driver. So give yourself every advantage by preparing yourself and your vehicle before setting out on Canadian roads this winter.

The tips outlined below will help you get through the winter safely.

- Ensure your vehicle is ready by having it serviced approximately every 5,000 km or, on average, every 4 – 5 months. Visit a licensed technician for a seasonal maintenance check-up. Have your battery, belts, hoses, radiator, oil, lights, brakes, exhaust system, heater/defroster, tires, wipers and ignition system inspected.
- Invest in winter tires. All season tires might not be the most appropriate choice or be safe enough for the type of winter driving you do depending on the nature of the areas you travel most. Consider a set of winter tires on a second set of rims that you can changeover so you are ready for the snow and ice. Winter tires can significantly increase traction, control and braking ability. Remember to check tire air pressure frequently, as it decreases in colder weather.
- Ensure your windshield wipers are in good condition and that your wiper fluid is full. Carry an extra jug in your vehicle.
- Clear all snow and ice off the vehicle (especially headlights, tail lights and hood) and warm your vehicle up before driving. Do not drive with windows covered in frost or snow or fogged up.
- Keep your gas tank full. You may use more gas while travelling because it may be necessary to change routes, stop temporarily or turn back during a bad storm.
- Bring along a fully charged cell phone and charger and keep a winter survival kit in your vehicle.
Recommended items include:
 - Ice scraper/snowbrush
 - Shovel
 - Sand or other traction aid
 - Tow rope or chain
 - Booster cables
 - Road flares or warning lights
 - Gas line antifreeze
 - Flashlight and batteries
 - First aid kit
 - Fire extinguisher
 - Small tool kit
 - Extra clothing and footwear
 - Blanket
 - Non-perishable energy foods – e.g., chocolate or granola bars, juice, soup, bottled water
 - Candle and a small tin can
 - Matches or lighter
- Do not drive when you are tired or fatigued.
- Remove snow from your boots before getting in the vehicle to avoid your foot slipping off the brake pedal.
- Assess driving conditions and leave early so you're not rushing to get to where you need to be. Try to travel during daylight and consider delaying your trip if the weather is bad. Advise someone where you are traveling to, the route you are taking, and your approximate arrival time. Listen to weather alerts on the radio and if conditions don't seem favorable, don't drive.

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- Turn on the vehicle's full lighting system when visibility is poor. It is critical for drivers to see and be seen in low light conditions, and when blowing snow and white-outs impair visibility.
- Adjust your driving for winter. Posted speed limits are meant for ideal weather and road conditions. Slow down during winter. Line delineation is often not clear if it is foggy, snowing or if the roads are snow packed. Be aware of the road's shoulder and the centre line at all times.
- Avoid using cruise control during wintry conditions. Even roads that appear clear can have sudden slippery spots and the slightest touch of your brakes to deactivate the cruise control can cause you to lose control of your vehicle.
- Never tailgate. To minimize the chances of hitting a vehicle in front of you on winter roads (when braking and stopping time generally decreases), keep a four-car distance from other vehicles.
- Watch for black ice. Black ice occurs between +4°C and -4°C and is often found near bridges, sheltered areas and overpasses.
- If you're stranded in your vehicle:
 - Call for assistance on your cell phone, but keep your calls brief to save your battery.
 - Turn on your hazard warning lights. Raise the hood of your vehicle as a distress signal and set out flags and flares if possible.
 - Use supplies in your winter survival kit to keep warm and dry. Eat small snacks every hour or so to give your body an energy source with which to generate heat. Drink about 4 ounces (half cup) of water every hour or so to prevent dehydration.
 - Stay in your vehicle and wait for emergency personnel to arrive. Most deaths occur when people get out of the car, get lost, and freeze to death. A single person walking through the snow is harder to find than a stranded car or truck.
- If possible, run your vehicle for a few minutes every hour to keep the interior warm. Leave one window on the sheltered side (away from the wind) partially open to let in fresh air and to prevent the buildup of carbon monoxide. Ensure the exhaust pipe is clear of snow and debris. If you can't run your vehicle, light a candle to keep warm.
- Keep yourself moving. Stimulate circulation by moving your arms, hands, and feet.
- Don't fall asleep unless accompanied by others. At least one person should be awake at all times.

Severe driving conditions may make you nervous, uncomfortable, or fearful. If you have any doubt, stay off the road unless your trip is absolutely necessary. If you do travel, proper preparation and the right skills will help you face the challenges of winter driving.

So as the old motto goes... "be prepared" and drive according to the winter conditions.