

Tips for Driving Safely in the Snow

Winter driving is dangerous and can be terrifying, even for well-seasoned motorists. The American Automobile Association's (AAA) Foundation for Traffic Safety says snow-covered roads – as well as roads coated with ice, slush or water – account for nearly 500,000 vehicle crashes and more than 2,000 road deaths each winter.

Winter driving is all about slowing down and taking it easy. Giving yourself plenty of time to get to your destination and keeping plenty of distance between you and the vehicles in front and to the side of your vehicle. Be mindful to lower your speed to account for road conditions and your car's poorer traction. A vehicle's tires can easily slide on snow and ice making it necessary for you to gently press down on the brake pedal to stop.

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15 Important Winter Driving Tips:

1. If weather is really bad with blowing snow and low visibility - consider staying home and venture out later when the road conditions are more favorable.
2. Respect snow plows for the driver is focused on the road ahead of him/her. With flying snow and the huge plow in front of the driver, their peripheral vision is probably limited and they might not see you if you get too close to them.
3. Know your car's brakes and how they will react with different types of pressure. Antilock brakes need to be stomped on and the brakes will pulse to slow the car down. Cars without this feature, could easily go into a spin if you press too hard down on them on a snowy road surface.
4. All-wheel drive doesn't mean you are invincible on snow and ice. It is easy to have a false sense of security that the 4-wheel drive or all-wheel drive vehicle will make you safer when driving these vehicles in wintry conditions. However, studies have shown that these vehicles are no better than a rear or front wheel drive vehicle in these conditions. You will need to be cautious no matter what type of vehicle you are driving.
5. Check your tires monthly to make sure they are inflated properly and that they have a sufficient amount of tread. Bald tires will easily slide on snow and ice while also increasing the amount of distance needed to stop your vehicle due to lack of traction.
6. Don't forget to check your spare tire air pressure monthly. Some car manufacturers have replaced the spare tire with a repair kit. The kit usually consists of a small compressor, hose and a bottle of thick, sticky sealant that is forced through the valve into the tire. AAA recommends checking the kit's expiration date and replacing it every four years.
7. Make sure you have a full tank of gas. If you are going a distance, you don't want to run out of gas if you get stuck in bumper-to-bumper traffic during a snowstorm. General rule of thumb in the winter: When your tank hits half empty be sure to fill it up.
8. Be prepared for the unexpected. Pack a kit in your car that contains bottled water, non-perishable food, change of clothes, first-aid kit, small shovel, blankets, flashlight and any other items you feel you would need to survive for several hours in the cold in your car. A bag of kitty litter could come in handy if you get stuck in a rut in the snow.
9. Don't forget Jessica's Law - Since 2002, New Hampshire drivers have been legally required to clear snow and ice off their cars before getting on the road. Jessica's Law was passed after

Jessica Smith was killed when ice from a tractor-trailer hit a box truck that ended up hitting her car.

10. Minimize distractions – Try to avoid eating while driving, talking on your cell phone or playing with the radio. The risk of an accident increases greatly when there is snow and ice on the road.
11. Watch for “Black Ice”. The road could appear just wet but when you are on it you find it is ice covered. Many vehicles post the outside temperature on the instrument panel display or elsewhere in the vehicle – as it gets close to or below freezing, beware. Remember, bridges and overpasses freeze first.
12. Don’t use cruise control. The road conditions could quickly change and the system might not react as quickly as you would to slow down. This excess speed could result in you losing control of the vehicle.
13. Don’t stop going up a hill. There’s nothing worse than trying to get moving up a hill on an icy road. Get some inertia going on a flat roadway before you take on the hill. Don’t use too much gas trying to get up the hill for it will just make your tires spin on the slippery snow. When you get to the crest of the hill, reduce your speed by taking your foot off the gas and slowly go down the hill.
14. Easy does it when getting out of a rut in the road. Straighten the wheels and accelerate slowly. Do not spin the tires because you likely will dig deeper into the snow, making it more difficult to move forward. If possible, spread sand or kitty litter to help you gain traction.
15. Check wiper blades and maintain plenty of windshield washer fluid. It is best to use a liquid that does not freeze and keep an extra gallon of the fluid in your vehicle. Streaky wiper blades should be replaced.

We hope you found this information helpful. We at Brownell Insurance Center wish you a safe driving winter.