

MSU - Dawg Tracks

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MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY™
EXTENSION

Safe Winter Driving Tips

Winter is a great time of the year for many folks. Hunting seasons are in; holidays create travel to visit relatives and friends. But winter can also be treacherous and dangerous. If you are making a short trip or a long, extended one, there are precautions that you should take for you and your passengers' safety.

We all endeavor to have our vehicles in prime condition for the long and unpredictable winter season. Not only do we want to maintain it in a "road ready" condition for fuel economy and security but also to have it winterized for the cold and frigid winter conditions that we sometimes face. While winters in the south are not quite as treacherous as those up north, but we still need to keep our vehicles in "winter ready" condition.

Following is a list of items to check to ensure your vehicle is prepared for the winters ahead:

- ~ Ignition system
- ~ Fuel system
- ~ Belts
- ~ Fluid levels
- ~ Brakes
- ~ Exhaust system
- ~ Battery
- ~ Antifreeze
- ~ Wiper blades/windshield fluid
- ~ Tire tread and pressure
- ~ Snow tires (optional in the south)
- ~ Defroster
- ~ Proper grade oil
- ~ Cooling system
- ~ Lights

One thing that I practice, and is always among those items to practice in winter driving, is to keep your fuel tank full. I try to never let my tank get below the half full mark. This way you are ready if an emergency comes up at night, but also it reduces the potential for condensation. There was a time when there were no cell phones, but now keeping one with you at all times allows for the feeling of security, and having it in your vehicle adds to this feeling of security.

MISCELLANEOUS TIPS-

- ✓ Clear all windows of frost and snow or ice.
- ✓ Drive with your headlights on.
- ✓ Allow plenty room between you and the vehicle in front of you.
- ✓ Use your brakes softly, instead of rapid depression.
- ✓ Heed the roadway signs "bridges ice before the roads."
- ✓ Do not use your "cruise control" in any wet road conditions. You can easily hydroplane with no control of your destiny.
- ✓ If you have a 4x4, be just as careful. You can start faster, but have no more control than with a 2x2 in wet or snowy conditions. A 4x4 is usually heavier, so it can take longer to stop.
- ✓ Be careful when descending exit ramps. They aren't maintained as well as roads, in most cases.
- ✓ Look all around you when driving, staying focused for potential hazards, not only for your aid, but watching out for those other "goof balls" that may not be as cognizant as you.
- ✓ **MOST IMPORTANT: SLOW DOWN! WEAR YOUR SEAT BELTS!**

- ✓ Check your local TV or radio station to check weather and road conditions before embarking on a trip.
- ✓ Leave an itinerary with all the pertinent information for your family or significant other. In case of an emergency, they will have some insight on locating you.

There is one thing that most insurance companies recommend us to do, and I'll be willing to bet that not many of us practice this tip: have an emergency kit in our vehicles. I have a skeleton of one somewhat, but I need to have more of the items in them. Even though we aren't laden with heavy snow and ice on a regular basis in our winters, we do have small two or three day bursts of it occasionally. Nevertheless, we should consider assembling an emergency kit for use in an emergency.

Following is a variety of items that you should include when assembling a kit:

- ~ Jumper cables
- ~ Small shovel & scraper
- ~ Flares, boots
- ~ Bag of sand for traction in ice
- ~ Container of non-perishable food
- ~ Flares or reflectors
- ~ Piece of bright cloth
- ~ Extra bottles of water
- ~ Bag with extra clothing: socks, gloves, parka, warm jacket
- ~ Blankets
- ~ Flashlight/extra batteries

TIPS IN CASE YOU ARE STRANDED-

- ✓ If you have your cell phone, call 911 or 0 if 911 capability is not available.
- ✓ Be prepared to give the dispatcher this information:
 - ~ Your approximate location, your problem, and the condition of your passengers.
 - ~ Listen for questions from the dispatcher.
 - ~ Be sure that you comprehend everything that the dispatcher is telling you.
- ✓ Stay in your vehicle! Outside walking can cause several potential problems, all of which put you in harm's way.
- ✓ Avoid exertion! As the saying goes, "Keep calm while those around you are losing theirs."
- ✓ Don't run your engine unless you have to and then only for a short time to warm up the inside. Make sure that the exhaust pipe is clear of any snow, ice, or mud.
- ✓ Keep fresh air in the vehicle by cracking a window for a short time. Turn on the dome light occasionally (only with the motor running).
- ✓ Don't expect to be comfortable! Your mode in this situation is to survive!
- ✓ Tie a bright cloth to your antenna or in a conspicuous location for potential rescuers to be able to see it.

**SAFETY- DID IT- DONE IT
DOING IT TOMORROW!!**
WORK SAFE TODAY ---
LET HEAVEN WAIT!!!