

# MSU-ES Dawg Tracks



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Tips for Safe Winter Driving



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Winter is upon us and driving conditions may get a little raucous. We never know how the weather will be here in Mississippi from day to day, so we must prepare ourselves for whatever may come.

Extension folks probably drive more than all the rest of the university employees combined. So, it is imperative that we drive carefully, courteously, and cautiously.

If we heed the following tips, it will help to keep us safer as we are all traveling to various locations;

- **Allow sufficient time to arrive at your destination** – Allow extra time to reach your destination, rather than have to fight and take careless chances.
- **Wait out bad weather** – Icy roads are fairly uncommon in our area; however they do occur at irregular intervals. Sometimes the icy roads are coupled with snow dusting, which makes the driving or walking even more treacherous. If you have a situation with these conditions, it is better for you to relax and wait until conditions improve. No need to gamble with an accident and/or serious injury.
- **Check your vehicle before leaving on a day trip** - If your vehicle sits out in the weather over night, you might want to check it out in **the** morning. Check for ice in the grill work or on the top of your vehicle. If the grill work is blocked, you will need to clean it out before starting out on your journey.

**Good visibility is critical for safe driving** - Maintain good windshield wiper blades and keep them clean. Also keep your reservoir full of wiper fluid for added visibility. Keep your headlights clean as well.

- **Drive appropriately for the road conditions** – Posted speed limits should not be a factor in inclement weather. We should drive at the speed that give us control in bad weather and disregard the speed limits. I'm sure, like myself, you have seen motorists that drive in wet conditions exactly the way they do when it is clear. If you feel yourself losing control while driving in inclement weather, take your foot off the accelerator.
- **Keep a safe distance between you and the vehicle in front of you** – In the National Safety Council "Safe Driving" seminar, we learned to use the "two-second rule" while driving in dry road conditions, but on wet roads, we should double this figure to the "four-second rule." Watch the vehicle in front of you, as it passes a stationary object, start counting 1,001, 1,002 and so on. Your vehicle should not pass the same object until you say the word "four."
- **Plan your moves carefully** - In slippery conditions, don't jam or lock your brakes in a panic stop. You will most likely start skidding and lose control of the vehicle. Instead, start by pumping the brakes softly a few times.
- **Stay calm** – I'm sure that we have all seen drivers in heavy, slow moving traffic get frustrated. Sometimes it's hard, but we should hold our heads and temper control while others around us have lost theirs.
- **Stay Alert** – Obviously, we know not to drive while under the influence of alcohol or drugs. It's just as important to be aware of any prescription drugs that make you sleepy or drowsy. Driving commands our full attention.