

Winter - Holiday Travel Tips



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AAA Reminds Holiday Travelers to Brush Up on Winter Weather Driving

Minneapolis, MN (December, 19, 2012) AAA projects 93.3 million Americans will journey 50 miles or more from home during the year-end holidays. Nearly one-quarter of weather related vehicle crashes occur on snowy, slushy or icy pavement, resulting in more than 1,300 deaths and 116,800 injured annually, according to data from the Federal Highway Administration. With the winter forecast calling for above-normal snowfall in some parts of the country and the first official day of winter December 21, AAA reminds motorists to be cautious when the weather outside turns frightful.

Preparing the driver - To minimize the dangers associated with winter driving, both the vehicle and the driver must be prepared in advance. For the driver, this means approaching winter driving with a right frame of mind. Always drive at a speed that matches the prevailing visibility, traffic, and road conditions. In addition:

Watch weather reports prior to a long-distance drive or before driving in isolated areas. Delay trips when especially bad weather is expected.

Avoid driving while you're fatigued. Getting the proper amount of rest before taking on winter weather tasks reduces driving risks.

It is also important when driving in winter conditions to drive distraction-free and in the right frame of mind. The AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety found that looking away from the road for just two seconds doubles your risk of being in a crash.

Plan your route ahead of time and let someone know what that route is and when you expect to arrive at your destination. Allow yourself extra travel time in adverse

conditions.

Wear clothing that provides warmth, comfort, and freedom of movement. Once a vehicle's interior has warmed up, a zip-fastened, lined jacket and pair of thin leather gloves is ideal.

Preparing the vehicle - From a mechanical aspect, winter conditions—wet, cold, and icy weather—present the greatest challenge to your vehicle's operating efficiency. Minnesota's winter climate greatly increases the stress and strain on your vehicle, and minor deficiencies can often develop into major problems.

Make certain your tires are properly inflated and that all of your vehicle's systems are functioning properly.

Never warm up a vehicle in an enclosed area, such as a garage. Make sure the exhaust pipe isn't clogged with snow, ice or mud. A blocked exhaust could cause deadly carbon monoxide gas to leak into the passenger compartment with the engine running.

Keep your gas tank at least half full to avoid gas line freeze-up.

Clear all snow and ice from the car to improve visibility and reduce hazards to other drivers (clear all windows, hood, roof, trunk, turn signals, taillights, and headlights).

Carry an emergency kit equipped for winter weather. The kit should include:

- Mobile phone, pre-programmed with rescue apps and important phone numbers
- Drinking water
- First-aid kit
- Nonperishable snacks for both human and pet passengers
- Snow shovel
- Blankets
- Flashlight with extra batteries
- Window washer solvent
- Ice scraper with brush
- Jumper cables
- Warning devices (flares or triangles)
- Basic toolkit (screwdrivers, pliers, adjustable wrench)

Do's & don'ts on the road - Knowing how to traverse winter's challenging environment can reduce your risk of a crash or becoming stranded. Practicing proper winter driving techniques in adverse conditions will help you arrive safely each time you take to the

road.

If possible, avoid using your parking brake in cold, rainy and snowy weather. Do not use cruise control when driving on any slippery surface (wet, ice, sand). Accelerate and decelerate slowly. Applying the gas slowly to accelerate is the best method for regaining traction and avoiding skids. Take extra time to slow down when coming to a stop. Remember, everything takes longer on snow-covered roads: accelerating, stopping, and turning. Give yourself plenty of time to safely execute these maneuvers. Increase your following distance. The normal following distance of three to four seconds should be increased to eight to 10 seconds to provide more time should you need to stop.

Know your brakes. Whether you have antilock brakes or not, the best way to stop is threshold breaking. Keep the heel of your foot on the floor and use the ball of your foot to apply firm, steady pressure on the brake pedal.

If you become snow-bound, stay with your vehicle. It provides temporary shelter and makes it easier for rescuers to locate you. Don't try to walk in a severe storm. It's easy to lose sight of your vehicle in blowing snow and become lost.

Celebrating the season – The holidays are a time for celebration. Alcohol-impaired drivers make up about one-third of all motor vehicle deaths. Preventing drinking and driving is a shared responsibility to save lives. If you are planning to celebrate during the holidays remember to celebrate responsibly. Designate a sober driver or make arrangements for a safe ride home.