

SAFETY NEWSLETTER

NORTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY

Winter Driving Tips for Driving in the Snow

With the snow finally arriving, it's important that we remind ourselves with the realities of winter driving. The American Automobile Association (AAA) offers the following information to help make your commutes safe ones.

Severe weather can be both frightening and dangerous for travelers. Winter storms, bad weather and sloppy road conditions are a factor in nearly half a million crashes and more than 2,000 road deaths every winter, according to research by the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety. Drivers should know the safety rules for dealing with winter road emergencies. AAA urges drivers to be cautious while driving in adverse weather.

AAA recommends the following tips while driving in snowy and icy conditions:

- **Tires.** Make certain your tires are properly inflated and have plenty of tread.
- **Fuel tank.** Keep at least half a tank of fuel in your vehicle at all times.
- **Do not use cruise control** when driving on any slippery surface, such as on ice and snow.
- **Stay home.** Only go out if necessary. Even if you can drive well in bad weather, it's better to avoid taking unnecessary risks by venturing out.
- **Drive slowly.** Always adjust your speed down to account for lower traction when driving on snow or ice.
- **Accelerate and decelerate slowly.** Apply the gas slowly to regain traction and avoid skids. Don't try to get moving in a hurry and take time to slow down for a stoplight. Remember it takes longer to slow down on icy roads.
- **Increase your following distance** to five to six seconds. This increased margin of safety will provide the longer distance needed if you have to stop.
- **Know your brakes.** Whether you have antilock brakes or not, 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.
- **Don't power up hills.** Applying extra gas on snow-covered roads will just make your wheels spin. Try to get a little inertia going before you reach the hill and let that inertia carry you to the top. As you reach the crest of the hill, reduce your speed and proceed downhill slowly.
- **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.



Winter Vehicle Survival Kits

A winter survival kit should be present in every vehicle as the seasons change. In an emergency, there is no substitute for being prepared ahead of time. There are various options on the market for purchase, but one can easily be created by yourself. North Dakota's Vision Zero strategy offers the following advice on what to include in your kit, and guidance in case you become stranded.



- Jumper cables
- Small shovel and some sand/cat litter for traction
- Flashlight and extra batteries
- Flares or reflective triangles, something red or orange, and a whistle to signal for help
- Cell phone
- Carpet strips (for traction under wheels)
- Boots
- Ice scrapers and brush
- Newspapers (great insulation when placed between skin and clothing)
- Tools
- First aid kit
- Food
- Blanket
- Tire chains (for use on secondary roads only)

If stranded:

- Stay with your vehicle.
- Run the engine sparingly. Start with 15 minutes every hour and adjust if needed.
- Keep the exhaust pipe clear of snow.
- If the cold is extreme, it may be necessary to keep the engine running continuously. It may not restart if you shut it off.
- Keep your feet off the floor if the heater is not on.
- Never go to sleep with the engine running.
- Read to pass the time.
- Position car so it faces into the wind.
- Tie a colorful banner on the car antenna.
- If you need to leave the car for any distance during the storm, tie a nylon rope to the car and yourself so you will be able to find your way back to the car.
- Move all your emergency supplies from the trunk to the interior of the car as soon as you realize you will be staying

for a while. Put on warm clothing right away, before you get cold. It is easier to stay warm than it is to regain lost warmth. Loosen tight clothing so body heat can circulate. Remove metal jewelry as it can chill you.

- Check your supplies to see what you have to work with and arrange them in order for their use. This will help you ration them in case you are stranded for a long period of time.
- Here's a tip from cold weather campers: eat a snack of high calorie food just before sleeping to stimulate your metabolism (heat production). If you awaken due to the cold, eat more high energy food and add another layer of insulation such as more clothing or a blanket.

Remember, if you are stranded because of winter weather, it is best to stay with your vehicle so you can be found!



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