



# Winter Hazard Awareness and Safety Information

## WINTER SAFETY CHECKLIST - FOR DRIVING AND TRAVEL

### **PREPARE YOUR VEHICLE FOR WINTER:**

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- Winterize your vehicle to avoid breakdowns. Many auto repair stations offer “Winterizing” service in the fall. Have a certified mechanic check the following:
  - Battery
  - Wipers and washer fluid
  - Antifreeze
  - Ignition system
  - Thermostat
  - Lights
  - Exhaust system
  - Flashing hazard lights
  - Heater
  - Brakes
  - Defroster
  - Oil level
  - Tires and air pressure — consider getting snow tires or chains

### **BEFORE YOU DRIVE:**

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- Check current road conditions. Go to [www.Mn511.org](http://www.Mn511.org) for the latest information.
- Set the car radio to stations that regularly broadcast weather warnings, traffic reports and instructions.
- Assemble an emergency kit and keep it in the vehicle throughout the season.
- Keep essential items in the car. Include paper road maps (even if you have GPS), a cell phone with charger, a shovel, windshield scraper, tow rope, booster cables, and a reflector or brightly colored cloth to use as a distress signal. Include a bag of sand/salt or non-clumping cat litter to place under tires if stuck in snow or ice.
- For long trips, tell someone where you are going, the routes you intend to travel and when you expect to return. When you reach your destination, call to report you have arrived.
- Stay on designated roads or detours. Avoid “short cuts” off main highways, as these may not be plowed or patrolled.
- Before leaving town, fill your gas tank. While traveling, stop frequently to refill your tank.

### **ON THE ROAD:**

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- Always buckle your seat belt!
- Brake properly to avoid skidding. If driving on snow or ice, start slowly and brake gently. Begin braking extra early when approaching an intersection.
- If you start to slide, ease off the gas pedal or brakes. Steer into the direction of the skid until you regain traction. Then straighten your vehicle. If you have antilock brakes, apply steady pressure.
- In fog, drive with headlights set on dim or use fog lights.
- In rain, fog, snow or sleet, stay within the limits of your vision. If it is too difficult to see, pull off the road and stop. Turn on hazard blinkers.
- Decrease speed and increase following distance on hazardous roads. Your speed should adjust for conditions without becoming an impediment to traffic flow.



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### ON THE ROAD:

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- Watch for slick spots, especially on bridges and overpasses. Be physically and mentally prepared to react.
- Never try to pass in blowing snow, as there may be vehicles ahead you cannot see.
- Be alert for snowplows. When a plow is coming toward you, allow plenty of room for it to pass. Its blade may cross the centerline. Allow extra distance between your vehicle and service vehicles, as they may be spreading salt.
- NEVER drive into a snow cloud. A snow plow may be ahead clearing the lane or preparing to turn around.
- Be careful after any minor accident. If you are bumped from behind and do not feel comfortable exiting your vehicle, motion to the other driver and drive to the nearest safe place to stop, such as a 24-hour store.
- Be prepared to turn back and seek shelter if conditions become threatening.

### IF YOU BECOME STRANDED:

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- If you break down, pull as far off the road as possible. Your greatest threat at this point is being hit by passing cars. Turn on emergency flashers.
- Stay in the car. You could become disoriented and lost trying to walk in a snowstorm.
- If you have a cell phone, call 9-1-1 for help. Do not turn off your cell phone. Most modern phones have locating signals that can help rescuers pinpoint your location.
- Display a trouble sign. Attach a brightly colored cloth to your car's antenna or door.
- Run the engine occasionally to keep warm. Turn on the engine for 10 minutes each hour. Run the heater during this time. Recharge your cell phone if possible.
- Beware of carbon monoxide accumulation. Clear snow away from the exhaust pipe and open a downwind window slightly for ventilation.
- If it is dark, turn on your vehicle's interior light to make it easier for rescuers to find you.
- Avoid over-exertion. Cold weather puts added strain on the heart. Shoveling snow or pushing a car in freezing temperatures can cause a heart attack or make other medical conditions worse.
- If you are outside, watch for signs of hypothermia or frostbite.
- Use your emergency kit as necessary. Stay hydrated if possible.