



KW Insurance Agency

## Driving Safely in Winter Weather

Falling snow can be picturesque, but it can also wreak havoc on the roads. While no one enjoys driving in snowy or slippery conditions, there are steps you can take to help improve your safety.

Here are some guidelines that can help you stay safe when driving in adverse winter conditions:

- Make sure your car is prepared for cold temperatures and wintery conditions like snow and ice. Keep your equipment properly maintained and include a winter survival kit in your vehicle: an ice scraper, snow shovel and sand/salt. Jumper cables are also a good idea since batteries are prone to failure during cold weather.
- Clear snow and ice off your car – including windows, mirrors, lights, reflectors, hood, roof and trunk.
- Drive with your headlights on, and be sure to keep them clean to improve visibility.
- Use caution when snow banks limit your view of oncoming traffic.
- Avoid using cruise control in snowy or icy conditions. In adverse conditions, you want as much control of your car as possible.
- Know how to brake on slippery surfaces. Vehicles with anti-lock brakes operate much differently from those that do not have anti-lock brakes. You should consult your vehicle's owner's manual for instructions on how to brake properly if your vehicle should start to skid.
- Maintain at least a half tank of gas during the winter season. This helps ensure you have a source of heat if you are stuck or stranded.
- If you do venture out or are unexpectedly caught in a snowstorm and encounter problems, stay in your car and wait for help. You can run the car heater to stay warm for 10 minutes every hour, but make sure your exhaust pipe is clear of snow. There is a danger of carbon monoxide poisoning if snow blocks the pipe and enables the deadly gas to build up in your car. Open your window slightly to help prevent the buildup.
- Keep your windshield washer reservoir full, and make sure your car has wiper blades that are in good condition.
- Remember that speed limits are meant for dry roads, not roads covered in snow and ice. You should reduce your speed and increase your following distance as road conditions and visibility worsen.
- Be cautious on bridges and overpasses as they are commonly the first areas to become icy.
- Avoid passing snow plows and sand trucks. The drivers can have limited visibility, and the road in front of them could be worse than the road behind.
- Monitor road and weather conditions by checking local news stations or Internet traffic and weather sites.
- If you must travel during a snowstorm or in blizzard conditions, be sure to let a relative, friend or coworker know where you are headed and your expected arrival time. Avoid the temptation to check or be on your phone while driving as all of your attention should be on arriving safely.