

MassDOT Highway Division

<http://www.mhd.state.ma.us/default.asp?pgid=snowandice/winterTips&sid=aboutText>

Safe Winter Driving Tips

Winter is a beautiful time of the year in Massachusetts, especially when a fresh layer of new snow covers everything.

Winter can also be a very dangerous time of the year. If you plan on traveling during the winter, it pays to Prepare Your Vehicle For Winter Driving including having Winter Car Supplies. Just following some simple Safe Driving Tips and Using Common Sense While Driving Near Snow Plows could insure that you make your destination safely. However, be prepared for the unexpected. Know what to do In Case You're Stranded or In An accident.

Preparing your vehicle for winter driving

Reliable transportation is especially important in the winter. Not only should you keep your vehicle in top operating condition all year round - for safety and fuel economy, it is especially important to get it winterized to avoid any unpleasant or dangerous situation while traveling in frigid weather.

Check the following:

Ignition system	Fuel system
Belts	Fluid levels
Brakes	Exhaust system
Wiper blades	Windshield washer fluid
Snow tires	Tire tread and pressure
Defroster	Proper grade oil
Cooling system	Battery
Lights	Antifreeze

Always fill the gasoline tank before a long trip or even for a short distance. Stop to fill-up long before the tank begins to run low. Keeping your tank as full as possible will minimize condensation, providing the maximum advantage in case of trouble.

A Citizens Band (CB) radio and/or cellular phone can be very useful to you or another stranded motorist in case of an emergency.

- * Clear all windows and lights of frost and snow.
- * Drive with your headlights on.
- * Stock your car with basic winter driving equipment: A scraper and brush, small shovel, jumper cables, tow chain and a bag of sand or cat litter for tire traction. (See Winter car supplies below.)
- * Also include road flares, a blanket, heavy boots, warm clothing, and flashlight with batteries.
- * Remember to reverse the batteries in the case to avoid accidental switching, and burnout. Warm the batteries between your legs before using them.

Winter car supplies

- * Keep winter car supplies that can assist you in case of an emergency. You easily can equip your vehicle with essential gear for winter. Here's what you'll need:
- * Booster cables
- * Two or more blankets
- * Snow shovel and scraper
- * Flashlight and extra batteries
- * Extra clothing: cap, mittens, parka and overshoes or boots in case you have to walk for help.
- * High calorie, non-perishable food like candy and canned nuts.

- * Sand or strips of carpet for traction.
- * Extra windshield washer fluid and antifreeze
- * Flares or reflectors
- * Cloth/paper towels
- * Piece of bright cloth
- * Safe Winter Driving Tips

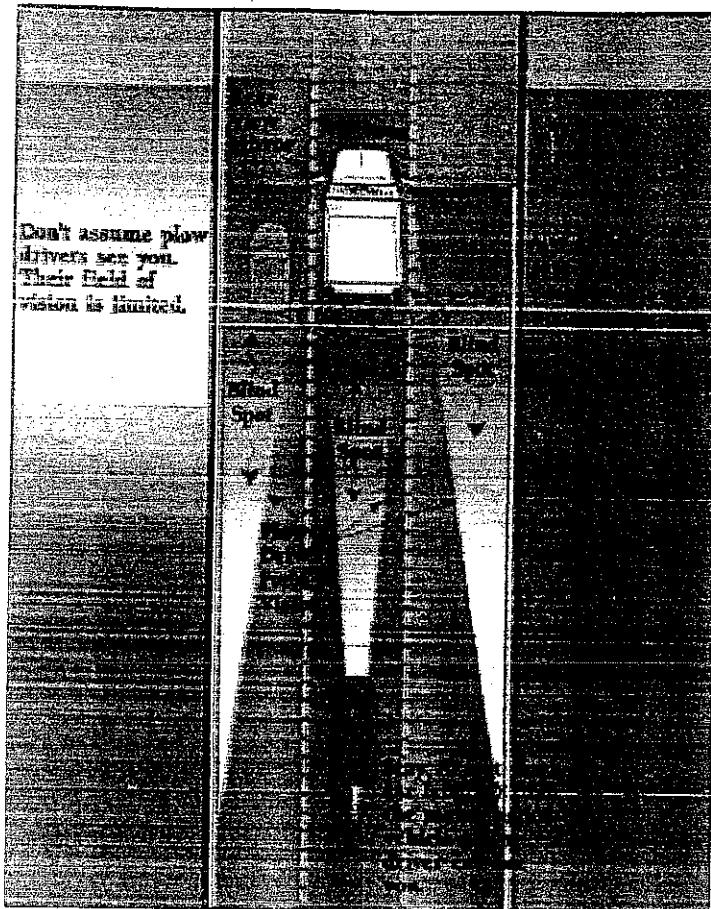
- Clear snow and ice from all windows and lights - even the hood and roof- before driving
- Leave plenty of room for stopping.
- Pay attention don't try to out drive the conditions. Remember the posted speed limits are for dry pavement.
- Know the current road conditions. Call 511 from your cell phone or (617) 374-1234 from either your cell phone or landline phone.
- Use brakes carefully. Brake early. Brake correctly. It takes more time and distance to stop in adverse conditions.
- Bridge decks freeze first. Due to the difference in the exposure to air, the surface condition can be worse on a bridge than on the approach road.
- Exit ramps are an even greater challenge during the winter since they may have received less anti-icing material than the main line. Be aware of this when exiting the highway.
- Don't use the "cruise control" option driving in wintry conditions. Even roads that appear clear can have sudden slippery spots and the slightest touch of your brakes to deactivate the cruise control can cause you to lose control of your vehicle.
- Don't get overconfident in your 4x4 vehicle. Remember that, if you are driving a four wheel drive vehicle, the vehicle may help you get going quicker but it won't help you stop any quicker. Many 4x4 vehicles are heavier than passenger vehicles and actually may take longer to stop. Don't get overconfident in your 4x4 vehicle's traction.
- Look further ahead in traffic than you normally do. Actions by cars and trucks will alert you quicker to problems and give you a split-second extra time to react safely.
- Remember that trucks are heavier than cars. Trucks take longer to safely respond and come to a complete stop, so avoid cutting quickly in front of them.
- Leave room for maintenance vehicles and plows - stay back at least 200 feet and don't pass on the right. (See additional information below.)
- Most importantly please remember to SLOW DOWN! Also, seat belts should be worn at all times - it's the law.

Use Common Sense While Driving Near Plows

Remember that the road in front of the plow is usually in much worse condition than the roadway behind the plow. Plows will typically travel under 35 miles per hour and there is always a temptation to pass them. For your safety, it is recommended that you stay a safe distance behind the snowplows.

During plowing operations, visibility can be reduced by blowing snow and plow operators may need time to stop or move over to avoid stranded vehicles. Keeping a safe distance between your vehicle and the plow is very important in order to avoid accidents.

Allow plenty of room when passing a snowplow. Do not cut back into the lane ahead of the plow too quickly since the blade extends several feet ahead of the truck. Some snowplows are equipped with a "wing plow," an eight-foot extension off the side of the truck. Be aware that the hazard exists



When you see an approaching snow plow on an undivided roadway, move as far away from the center line as you safely can since blowing snow may obscure the actual width of the snowplow's blade.

Turn on your lights- to see and be seen. Brush the snow off your headlights and taillights frequently.

Winter driving requires motorists to be careful and alert, but the most important tip for winter driving is: **SLOW DOWN!**

In Case You Are Stranded While Driving In Winter

Call 911. If you have access to a telephone call 911 to summons help. In other states you may be able to call 911 or "0" to get the operator on the line. When you talk to authorities, be prepared to:

- * Describe the location, condition of your companions and the trouble you are experiencing.
- * Listen for questions.
- * Follow any instruction. You may be told you should stay where you are to guide rescuers or to return to the scene.

Do not hang up until you know who you have spoken with and what will happen next.

Stay in your vehicle. Walking in a storm can be very dangerous. You can lose your way, wander out of reach, become exhausted, collapse and risk your life. Your vehicle itself is a good shelter.

Avoid overexertion. Attempting to push your car, trying to jack it into a new position or shoveling snow takes great effort in storm conditions. You could risk heart attack or other injury.

Calm down and think. The storm will end and you will be found. Don't work enough to get hot and sweaty. Wet clothing loses insulation quality making you more susceptible to the effects of hypothermia.

Keep fresh air in your vehicle. It is much better to be chilly or cold and awake than to become comfortably warm and slip into unconsciousness. Freezing-wet or wind-driven snow can plug your vehicle's exhaust system causing deadly carbon monoxide gas to enter your vehicle.

Don't run the engine-unless you are certain the exhaust pipe is free of snow or other objects. Keep the radiator free from snow to prevent the engine from overheating. Run the engine at 10 minute intervals for heat.

Turn on the dome light at night, but only when running the engine.

Keep your blood circulating freely by loosening tight clothing, changing positions frequently and moving your arms and legs. Huddle close to one another. Rub your hands together or put them under your armpits or between your legs. Remove your shoes occasionally and rub your feet.

Don't expect to be comfortable. The challenge is to survive until you're found.

Make yourself visible to rescuers. Tie a bright cloth to your antenna or door handle.
In Case You Are Involved In An Accident

Check to see if anyone is injured.

If necessary, call 911 and request an ambulance or emergency services.

If possible, move your vehicle off the road.

Exchange name, address, driver's license number, vehicle registration, and insurance information with all drivers or property owners who are involved. You must show your driver's license and registration if asked to do so.

If you have damaged a parked vehicle or stationary property, you must try to locate the owner to report the accident or notify the police.

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