

Tips for Winter Driving, from AAA

Be sure you can see and be seen. Clear snow and ice from the entire car-hood, roof, trunk, turn signals, taillights, headlights, windows, mirror and fender wells. Turn on your low-beam headlights, which provide better illumination in snow and fog than do high-beams.

Remember that posted speed limits are set for ideal road and weather conditions. It takes vehicles up to nine times as long to stop on ice or snow as on dry pavement. Slow down when visibility and road conditions are impaired by bad weather or traffic.

Go easy on starts, turns and stops. Accelerate carefully so car wheels don't spin. Don't brake hard.

In icy and snowy conditions, use "threshold" or "squeeze" braking. Apply the brakes firmly to a point just short of wheel lock up, then ease off the brake pedal slightly. Press down firmly again until you stop. Applying steady pressure is better than "pumping" the brakes and should be practiced on dry pavement prior to driving on snow.

If your car has antilock brakes, remember that the process is different. Press firmly on the brake pedal, and do not let up.

Four-wheel drive vehicles make it easier to get moving on snow-covered roads, but do not stop quicker than other vehicles.

Anticipate potential danger such as ice on bridges, snow-covered lane markings and poor visibility. Adjust speed, increase distance between other cars and change lanes to avoid trouble. Watch for other drivers who may be unprepared for changing road conditions.

In a skid, ease off the accelerator and don't lock up the brakes. Carefully steer in the direction you want the car to go and straighten the wheel as soon as the car begins to go in the desired direction.

Handling Winter Driving Emergencies: Advice From AAA

After a heavy snowfall, when you're going to dig your vehicle out, keep in mind to first clear the exhaust pipe(s) to avoid noxious exhaust fumes backing up into the vehicle's interior.

Clear your vehicle completely of ice and snow - especially, windows and lights. Snow and ice flying off a vehicle can blind other drivers resulting in a crash.

Increase following distance from the normal three seconds to between four and six seconds.

Slow down! Remember, posted speed limits are for ideal weather conditions. It can take a vehicle up to nine times longer to stop on snow and ice than on dry pavement.

Most motorists think they should steer into the skid. Not so. The best method of skid recovery is to look in the direction you want to go and then steer in that direction. Of course, the best way to avoid a skid is to slow down!

Know your vehicle! It's very important for you to know whether or not your vehicle has antilock brakes (ABS). Braking technique differs substantially depending on if you have this equipment or not. With ABS, simply step on the brake pedal and hold it down. The ABS system will electronically pump the brakes preventing wheel lock-up and allowing you to steer around potential hazards. Without ABS, you must use a technique called threshold braking wherein you step on the brake pedal and hold it at a point just prior to the wheels locking. You may have to modulate your foot pressure to prevent wheel lock-up. This technique will prevent a skid and possible loss of control of the vehicle.

Winter Survival Kit:

We recommend the following items be kept in your car during the winter months:

- Small shovel
- Ice scraper
- Small bag of abrasive material - sand, salt, non-clumping kitty litter
- Blanket
- Windshield de-icer
- Booster cables
- Flashlight
- Gloves
- Cell phone

Finally, remember that sometimes the best solution to hazardous road conditions is not to drive at all.