



Winter weather can be very unpredictable. It is important to keep your vehicle stocked in case the worst happens. Whether your vehicle breaks down, or you get stuck in the snow, a little preparation can make bad situation bearable, and it can also save your life.

## WINTERIZE YOUR VEHICLE

Have a mechanic check the following at the start of the winter season.

- Antifreeze Levels - make sure to keep levels full
- Battery and ignition system
- Brakes
- Exhaust system - leaks in your exhaust system can lead to carbon monoxide poisoning
- Fuel and air filters
- Heater and defroster
- Oil
- Thermostat
- Windshield wiper equipment and washer fluid
- Install good winter tires
- Always maintain at least a half tank of gas

## STOCK YOUR VEHICLE WITH WINTER ESSENTIALS

Put together an emergency kit and keep it in your car at all times.

- Cell Phone and/or CB Radio.** It is always a good idea to have a means of communication should you need help. Cell phone batteries die quickly in the cold, so keep your cell phone close to your body.
- Small Shovel.** This tool is essential if you get stuck in a snow bank and need to dig your way out.
- Extra Clothes and Blankets.** Several layers of clothing will keep you warmer than one heavy garment. Keep a sleeping bag or blanket in the trunk.
- Jumper Cables.** Cold weather can cause a car battery to fail. Make sure you know how to use the cables.
- Florescent Distress Flag.** If you get stuck and need help, tie a bright colored flag or cloth to your antennae or door handle to alert other drivers.
- First Aid Kit.** A first aid kit should be carried in your vehicle at all times.
- Flashlight.** Check flashlight batteries periodically.
- Extra Batteries.** Keep a stash of extra batteries, just in case.
- Non-Perishable Foods.** Foods like protein bars, raisins, and nuts are all good examples of food that keep for a long time, and will provide ample nourishment if you get stranded.
- Water.** This is one of the most important items to keep in your vehicle. A good rule of thumb is a gallon of water per person, should something happen. Keep water in smaller bottles in case it freezes, a smaller container is easier to defrost given limited resources.
- Candles, Matches, and a Lighter.** A candle can heat your car when you are not able to run the motor.
- Tow Rope and/or Chain.** If you get stuck, another vehicle can pull you out using a tow rope or chain. Make sure you educate yourself on how to attach it correctly.
- Ice Scraper and Snow Brush.** You can't get very far if your window is covered in ice and snow. Keep these handy to keep your windows clear.
- Sand, Kitty Litter, or Salt.** Not only can these provide weight in the rear of your vehicle to provide better traction, but they can also give your tires better grip if you're stuck on a slippery spot when spread over ice.





## WINTER DRIVING PRACTICES

According to the Federal Emergency Management Agency, automobile accidents account for more than 70% of deaths during winter storms in the United States. You must adjust your driving practices to correspond with the road conditions. If you travel in bad weather, follow the basic winter driving practices outlined below.

**Starting your Vehicle.** Vehicles need extra care when started in cold weather to ensure proper oil flow and lubrication. When you start your car, allow it to idle for a few minutes before driving. If your area has frequent sub-zero temperatures, you may wish to purchase an engine block heater.

**Cleaning your Vehicle.** Remove ice and snow from windows, lights and wipers. Do not forget to clean off the roof. Clear the entire windshield area, not just a small spot. If you do not have good visibility, you are creating a dangerous driving situation.

**Slowing Down.** Driving in hazardous conditions requires adjusting your speed. Whether it's snow or rain, if the roads are not ideal, you are more likely to lose control of your vehicle.

**Following Distance.** Allow extra time to stop in bad weather. Keep a good distance from the vehicle in front of you. Remember, your vehicle could take much longer to come to a complete stop if the roads are slippery. Prevent an accident and be extra cautious of these conditions.

**Handling a Skid.** If you start to skid, do not slam on your brakes or jerk the steering wheel. This can cause the wheels to lock if you do not have anti-lock brakes. Take your foot off the gas and gently turn the wheel in the direction you want the vehicle to go. If you counter skid and veer off in the other direction, adjust the wheel again.

**Getting Unstuck.** If you get stuck in the snow, avoid spinning your wheels, as it will cause the vehicle to sink deeper. Shovel snow away from the wheel paths. Scatter sand or kitty litter around the wheels to improve traction. You can also try traction pads or pieces of old carpeting.

## HANDLING ROADSIDE EMERGENCIES

Below is a "best practices" list that will help develop a plan if you are caught in a roadside emergency situation

- Pull as far off the road as possible to avoid being hit by another vehicle.
- Set out road flares to ensure others can see you if visibility is poor.
- Let others know you are having trouble by turning on your four-way flashers, and tying your distress flag to your antennae or door handle.
- Run the engine and heater for no more than ten minutes per hour. While running the engine, crack a window to avoid the risk of being overcome by carbon monoxide fumes.
- Keep the exhaust pipe clear of snow. If the exhaust pipe becomes clogged, the danger of carbon monoxide poisoning is greatly increased.
- Keep lights and windows clear so passing motorists can see that there are people in your car. Keeping your windows clear also allows you to see other drivers so you may signal them for help.
- Stay in the vehicle. Do not accept offers of "rides to the gas station." Instead, ask the person to send for help; either a police car or a service mechanic.

*This loss control flyer is offered in the hope that readers will benefit from it and take adequate steps to avoid conditions that might result in loss. It does not intend to be a complete discussion on the subject, nor do we guarantee that compliance with its suggestions will assure the safety of persons and property.*

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