

WINTER DRIVING INFO

Winter weather too often catches people unprepared. The National Weather Service reports that 70 percent of the fatalities related to ice and snow occur in automobiles, and about 25 percent of all winter-related fatalities are people caught off guard, out in the storm. What winter weather preparations are being made in your area and what are the appropriate steps to take that will ensure your winter weather safety? Preparing your vehicle for the winter season and knowing how to react if stranded or lost on the road are the keys to safe winter driving.

SAFE WINTER DRIVING TIPS

- Before you travel check with the National Weather Service (NWS). They issue winter weather warnings, watches and advisories. Please see www.arh.noaa.gov/hazards.php or you can dial 5-1-1 and request call transfer to the NWS weather information line.
- Know the current driving conditions . Listen to the local radio station, call 5-1-1 Travel In The Know, or log onto <http://511.alaska.gov>
- Clear snow and ice from all windows and lights – even the hood and roof – before driving.
- Plan long trips carefully.
- Don't let your gas fall below a half tank. You can't count gas stations being open in the winter.
- Let someone know where you'll be going and when you expect to arrive or return. Tell them to call authorities for help if you don't get back or check in within an hour of your estimate.
- Carry a cell phone or other communications radio. Know, however, that cell phone coverage along much of Alaska's highway system is spotty and you may not be able to reach someone on the cell. If you are within cell range and run into life-threatening trouble, use it.
- Travel during the daylight and travel with another person.
- If you must go out during a winter storm, use public transportation.
- Dress warmly. Wear layers of loose-fitting, layered, light weight clothing.
- Carry food and several bottles of water.
- Pay attention. Don't try to out-drive the conditions. Remember the posted speed limits are for dry pavement.
- Leave plenty of room for stopping.
- Leave room for maintenance vehicles and plows – stay back at least 200 feet and don't pass on the right.
- Use brakes carefully. Brake early. Brake correctly. It takes more time to stop in adverse conditions.
- Watch for slippery bridge decks, even when the rest of the pavement is in good condition. Bridge decks will ice up sooner than the adjacent pavement.



Prepare your vehicle for the winter season

- Have a mechanic check the following: battery, antifreeze, wipers and windshield washer fluid, ignition system, thermostat, lights, flashing hazard lights, exhaust system, heater, brakes, defroster, oil level (if necessary, replace existing oil with a winter grade oil).
- Install good winter tires. Make sure the tires have adequate tread. All-weather radials are usually adequate for most winter conditions. However, some jurisdictions require that to drive on their roads, vehicles must be equipped with chains or snow tires with studs.
- Keep a winter kit in the back seat of the car: Flashlights with extra batteries, first aid kit with pocket knife, necessary medications, several blankets, sleeping bags, extra newspapers for insulation, plastic bags (for sanitation), matches, mittens, socks, wool cap, rain gear and extra clothes, small sack of sand for generating traction under wheels, small shovel, small tools (pliers, wrench, screwdriver), booster

cables, set of tire chains or traction mats, cards, games, and puzzles, brightly colored cloth to use as a flag, dried fruit and nuts, and lots of hot liquid to drink (water for tea, hot chocolate).



If trapped in your car during a snow storm:



- Stay in the car. Do not leave the car to search for assistance unless help is visible within 100 yards. You may become disoriented and lost in blowing and drifting snow.
- Display a trouble sign or flag. Hang a brightly colored cloth on the radio antenna. Do NOT raise the hood. Snow and wind exposes the engine. Also, a strong gust of wind could cause the hood to snap and break the windshield exposing you to cold.
- Occasionally run engine to keep warm.
- Turn on the car's engine for about 10 minutes each hour. Run the heater when the car is running. Also, turn on the car's dome light when the car is running.
- Beware of carbon monoxide poisoning. Keep the exhaust pipe clear of snow, and open a downwind window slightly for ventilation.
- Watch for signs of frostbite and hypothermia.
- Do minor exercises to keep up circulation. Clap hands and move arms and legs occasionally. Try not to stay in one position for too long. If more than one person is in the car, take turns sleeping.
- For warmth, huddle together.
- Use newspapers, maps, and even the removable car mats for added insulation.
- Avoid overexertion. Cold weather puts an added strain on the heart.
- Unaccustomed exercise such as shoveling snow or pushing a car can bring on a heart attack or make other medical conditions worse. Be aware of symptoms of dehydration.

No Winter Maintenance Provided:

A few major highways are not maintained during the winter months. Travel is strongly discouraged for your safety. Please abide by these warnings as roads are impassable due to extreme weather conditions and may be life threatening. Emergency services and travel assistance are not available.

The following highways are NOT maintained during the winter months (October - May). These dates may vary depending on changing weather patterns year-after-year.

- Copper River Highway (MP 18 to Million Dollar Bridge, MP 49)
- Denali Highway (Paxson, MP 0 to Cantwell, MP 130)
- Denali Park Highway (Please see 511 for information or contact the Denali National Park)
- Eureka-Rampart Road (MP 0 to MP 3)
- Taylor Highway (Tetlin, MP 0 to Eagle, MP 160)
- Top-of-the World Highway
- McCarthy Road (Copper River Bridge, MP 0 to Kennecott River by McCarthy, MP 58)
- Nome area:
 - Council Road (E. of Nome, MP 5 to Council, MP 73)
 - Kougatok Road/Nome-Taylor Highway (N. of Nome, MP 13 to Kougatok River, MP 86)
 - Nome-Teller Highway (Snake River Bridge, MP 7 to S. of Teller, MP 68)
 - St. Mary's/Mountain Village Road (St. Mary's Airport, MP 5 to Mtn. Village Airport, MP



Note: This Safety Reminder is for informational purposes only. We recognize it doesn't cover everything.