Winter Driving Talking Points

Background:

a.. Army in Europe accident statistics show an increase in motor vehicle accidents during winter months.

b. Winter brings bad weather and hazardous driving conditions (for example, fewer daylight hours, fog, ice, rain, snow).

c. Employees unfamiliar with driving in these conditions must learn to compensate for winter weather hazards.

1. Driver and Supervisor Responsibilities

a. If road conditions are unsatisfactory, reconsider the need for the trip.

b. If the trip is essential, consider transportation other than an AMV or POV.

c. The driver must be well rested and not have consumed alcoholic beverages 8 hours before driving or while driving.

d. The driver and passengers will wear seatbelts.

e. The driver will use techniques to compensate for other drivers and for weather and road conditions (increase distance between vehicles, etc.).

3. Driver Attitude and Preparation

a. Drivers should refresh their memories about past winter-driving experiences.

b. Get the feel of the road. Try the brakes occasionally or gently depress the accelerator while driving. Rising temperatures increase the slipperiness of ice and snow. Drivers should adjust speed accordingly.

c. See and be seen. Do not be a “peephole” driver. Make sure all lights and windows are clear and clean of snow/ice/slush.

d. Increase following distance. Winter surfaces require stopping distances 3 to 12 times longer than dry surfaces. Trucks require longer stopping distances than smaller vehicles due to their weight.

2. Winterizing Cars; Vehicle should be in good mechanical condition, area’s to consider;

a. Brakes. Brakes must be properly adjusted and inspected before the winter season.

b. Tires. Winter tires should be mounted before the first snowfall. Unevenly worn tires may result in skids. Each tire should have an even tread of the required amount. Tires should be inflated to the proper pressure; low pressure may increase the tendency of the vehicle to skid or slide.

c. Tire Chains.

(1) Tire chains offer increased traction, reduced stopping distance, more protection from skids than any other device, and a general feeling of security.

(2) The life and performance of tire chains are improved by proper application. Twice the mileage may be obtained by applying them snugly according to mounting instructions.

d. Windshield Wipers. Wiper blades should operate with enough pressure to remove rain, sleet, and snow from the windshield without streaking. The windshield spray bottle should be full of fluid that doesn’t freeze.

e. Lights. Headlights should be adjusted properly. Lights, mirrors, and reflectors must function and be as clean as possible.

f. Heater and Defroster. This equipment must be able to keep the windshield and windows clear.

g. Muffler and Exhaust System. These systems must be free from leaks to protect against carbon monoxide poisoning. Running vehicle engines in confined spaces or sitting in closed, parked cars with the engine running can be fatal. Always ensure fresh air enters the passenger compartment while the engine is operating.

h. Antifreeze. The cooling system should be flushed, all connections tightened, and antifreeze added. The radiator and hoses should be checked for leaks.

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i. Winter Tune-up. A winter tune-up or check is a good ideal for cold-weather starting and preventing stalls. Check with AAFES, FMWR or host nation garages for this service, (only do it yourself if you know what you are doing).
j. Battery. The battery should be in good condition (properly charged, terminals clean and tight, free from cracks and corrosion). If the battery is 4 years or older, a battery check is a good idea, lifespans on batteries are around 4 years.

3. Typical Road Condition and Safe Driving Tips
a. Accidents may not be blamed solely on the weather. The driver can usually avoid getting into trouble.
b. The driver should not let winter clothing interfere with driving ability.
c. Too many people may crowd into the warm cab of an AMV. Limit the number of riders to ensure the driver has enough room to operate the vehicle controls.
d. Check fuel, oil, and coolant levels before starting on a trip. Keep the gas tank at least half full to prevent condensation and freezing of the gas-line.
e. Call ahead to your destination to check road conditions before starting on a trip outside your area.
f. Many highway surfaces are dangerous, even when cleared of ice and snow. Patches of ice may form on elevated road surfaces at freezing or near freezing temperatures. Icy patches may remain on shaded sections of the roadway long after the open roadway is dry and clear.
g. Glare ice forms easily on expressways where gently graded surfaces allow only slow runoff of water. Acceleration, deceleration, or even a slight turn can make a car go out of control. Drivers who find unexpected icy patches on roadways should maintain a constant speed and avoid braking, accelerating, or turning, when possible.
h. Steering and braking require great care on slippery surfaces. Change direction slowly and smoothly. When the pavement is slippery because of frost, ice, snow, or wet leaves, a quick turn of the steering wheel may result in a skid. Approach a turn at reduced speed and turn the wheel as gradually as possible.
i. The broad lanes, gradual curves, and relatively mild grades of European expressways (autobahns, autostradas) do not lessen the chance of skids and crashes on slippery road surfaces. Speed reduction is important. Adverse road conditions can lead to emergency situations on high-speed roads.

4. Skids and Skid Control
a. Skids result from sliding or spinning wheels and centrifugal force acting on the vehicle when driving into a curve. Steer in the direction of the rear-wheel skid, but only enough to correct the skid and put the vehicle back on course. Overcorrections result in “fishtailing.”
b. Front-end skids can result from locked wheels or a highly crowned road pavement. Front-end skids can often be corrected by releasing the brakes and letting the front wheels roll to regain traction and steering control.
c. Prevention is the best cure for skids. Reduce speed before shifting to a lower gear, the shift in weight on wheels can lead to a skid. Slow down before entering a curve, maintain a constant speed within the curve, and accelerate only at the exit of the curve.