

BOISE COUNTY

Winter Driving Tips and Tricks

By Earl McCreary
BOISE COUNTY -- It is that time of year when we must get ready for winter driving. This article will give you suggestions on how to prepare for winter driving and the steps to take to lessen the chance you will have problems in our snow conditions. I will talk about preparing your vehicle, what you should carry, suggestions for driving in winter conditions, and what to do if you find yourself stranded this winter.

One of the steps we need to take is prepare our vehicles for winter. Due to cold weather, check your battery and ensure it is in good condition. Most auto stores will do this for free. Check your wiper blades. I personally replace mine this time of year to ensure the windshield gets cleared well. Our tires are important for stopping and starting. Always ensure you have proper tire pressure and plenty of tread. All Season or AT tires are great for driving in the snow. Remember, as of Oct 1st, you can run studs on your tires through April 1st. Check that your anti-freeze is good for cold weather in your vehicle. One thing everyone recommends is ensuring you

keep your fuel tank above the half mark. The last thing is to ensure your washer fluid is the non-freeze type. I personally run the deicer fluid in my truck. Now, let's talk about getting our vehicles equipped with supplies for winter.

Every vehicle should have these essentials during the winter months. Most of these items can stay in the vehicle year around. Your Winter Emergency car kit should include the following: Water and snacks, Jumper cables or portable battery pack, warm clothes, warm blankets (the silver space blankets are great), shovel, ice scraper, snow brush, flashlights, cell phone chargers, tow strap, chains or traction devices, flares or orange triangles, and a first aid kit. These are the bare minimum. Pack your vehicle for the off chance you are stranded in the cold for a while or come across someone that is stranded. Remember if you have multiple people traveling then adjust the quantities of those items to accommodate everyone in the vehicle. Now that our vehicles are equipped, let's talk about driving during the winter.

Colder temperatures are set-

ting in, which means our roads can have black ice on them. There are two ways to identify a chance of black ice. The temperatures are around 32 or below and the road can look shiny. Anytime there is a vehicle in front of you, look at their tires if there is water spray coming off them, you should be clear of black ice, if there isn't there could be black ice. Ok, our vehicles are ready to go, now the snow hits and we must drive in the white stuff. Four Wheel and All Wheel drives are great for driving in the snow. They help us get started better, the downside is they don't help us stop quicker. Our stopping distances increase significantly with snow and ice on the road. Stopping distances on snow can increase up to 3-4x, and on ice to drive can increase up to 10 times compared to dry conditions. So make adjustments to your driving distances for the conditions. When your vehicle is warming up, ensure you clean all the snow off the vehicle. It is Idaho law that all windows are clear of ice and snow. It only takes minutes to clear our vehicles of this snow. The biggest tip for driving in the winter is to drive slow and

Winter Driving Safety: Build An Emergency Car Kit

- Water in small bottles so that they thaw quickly
- Spare mobile phone charger
- Jump leads or portable battery charger
- Energy-boosting snacks
- Tyre pressure gauge and tyre sealant
- Road flares or reflective hazard triangles
- Battery-powered weather radio
- Jacket, winter hat and gloves
- Tyre jack and lug wrench
- Warm blanket or sleeping bag
- Hand warmers
- Pocket knife or multi-tool
- Snow shovel and ice scraper
- Head lamp or torch
- Tow strap
- First aid kit

easy. Always give yourself plenty of time for travel so you don't feel you have to rush.

Always communicate your traveling plans to others. Our family texts each other when leaving the house and then again when we get to our destination. This way if we don't reach our destination, they know we had problems and can come looking for us. Even the most prepared driver can face unexpected difficulties in the winter. Imagine you find yourself off the road, can't get back on the road and must wait for help to come. Place flares or your orange triangles on the road so people know you are there. If you have cell phone reception, call 911. If you don't, you can run your vehicle to keep warm. Ensure

the snow is cleared from your exhaust pipe in the back and crack your windows a little bit, this should ensure you won't have to worry about carbon monoxide. This will help you keep warm. Keep your lights on so you are more visible to people on the road. Every expert tells us to stay with the vehicle. If you can't stay inside the vehicle because it isn't safe, then stay close to the vehicle. The exception would be if you can see a house close by. If you find yourself stranded, all of the steps mentioned above will help you out. Help will come soon enough. Everyone stay safe this winter. If you have any questions, just reach out to me on social media. Hopefully with all of this information we all will have a safe winter.

TOP 10 WINTER DRIVING TIPS

- 1 Check the road conditions before traveling. Visit 511.idaho.gov or download the Idaho 511 app
- 2 Be prepared. Keep a winter emergency kit in your car with food/water, etc.
- 3 When roads are wet or icy, slow down and give yourself more stopping distance. Remember, bridges and overpasses are the first to freeze when temperatures drop
- 4 Turn off cruise control if roads are slick
- 5 If you do slide, stay calm, brake very gently, and turn your wheel in the direction of the skid. Try not to overcorrect
- 6 Keep your windshield completely clear of snow and ice. Fill up on windshield washer fluid too
- 7 Learn how to use tire chains and carry them with you
- 8 Let someone know your travel plans, especially if you'll be driving through areas with no cell service
- 9 Give our snowplow drivers room to work. Never pass a snowplow on the right! The safest place is behind the plow
- 10 Buckle up, stay engaged behind the wheel, and drive for the conditions this winter

Are you **IDAHO READY** to drive safely? For more information visit: itd.idaho.gov/travel



Boise County's Treasurer Gina Turner donates her time after work to put up holiday decorations around the Miner's Exchange building, offices in Idaho City for county employees. Photo by E. Capson

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