

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
WINTER DRIVING TIPS
Wayne Holmes Emergency Coalition
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WINTER DRIVING TIPS

Driving in the winter in Ohio with its combination of cold weather, wind, snow, freezing rain, sleet, and ice presents challenges that test the skills of any driver. In a matter of minutes, a sudden drop in temperature can change the road surface from merely wet to a skating rink or a dry surface is suddenly covered with snow that is slick while visibility is limited. Every year several good drivers have crashes because of the road conditions. Driving when the roads are wet, icy, and snow covered increases your chances to be involved in a crash and the conditions magnify the little mistakes we all make from time to time.

When driving in such conditions, the first rule is to **SLOW DOWN**. It takes several seconds longer to stop when the roads are covered with snow or ice and vehicles can slide amazing distances. Make sure you allow adequate distance between you and any vehicles in front of you. For those who drive four-wheel drive vehicles, remember that while the system allows you to travel better, it does not decrease your stopping distance. Keep your speeds low as well. Remember that state and local law requires drivers to adjust their driving to the road conditions at all time. Failure to do so may not only result in a crash but a traffic citation as well.

Here are some other tips to make sure you are safe while driving in the winter:

1. Keep your vehicle in good condition.
 - Check your fluid levels
 - Keep your tires properly inflated
 - Get a tune up
 - Check your wipers, lights, and battery
 - Keep your gas tank half filled
 - Invest in a cell phone

2. Have a winter kit in your vehicle.
 - Shovel
 - Blanket
 - Tire Chains (check your local laws, some jurisdictions do not allow chains while in others it may be required)
 - Sand or kitty litter to help provide traction if you get stuck
 - Flashlight and extra batteries
 - Extra set of warm clothing

- If you are on an extended trip, consider adding snacks
3. What to do if you get stuck.
 - Don't spin your tires--you will just dig deeper into the snow
 - Turn the wheels a few times to clear away snow
 - Go easy on the gas
 - Use a shovel to clear away snow from around the tires and from under the vehicle
 - Use the sand or kitty litter to provide traction
 - Rock the car back and forth (check your owner's manual first; some cars can be damaged)
 4. Here are some other tips that can help you during the winter:
 - Clean your car. This includes all of the windows and your headlights and tail lights. A circle clear of snow on your windshield is not only unsafe but illegal as well.
 - Don't use your cruise control when the road is wet, icy, or snow covered.
 - Let your engine help you slow down.
 - Be especially cautious on bridges and overpasses. These surfaces can and do freeze long before the rest of the roadway. This is also true under bridges. Try to avoid accelerating or braking.
 - Change your route to avoid steep hills and sharp curves.
 - Don't stop while driving up hills. If you stop, you may not be able to get going again.
 - Look ahead and anticipate potential problems, remembering that you have less time to react in bad weather conditions.
 - Don't go out if you don't have to. Under severe conditions, it may be illegal for you to be on the road.
 - If you start sliding, stop accelerating or braking.
 - If you have anti-lock brakes, use steady pressure to stop or slow. If you do not have anti-lock brakes, pump your brakes slowly.

We hope these tips will help you drive safely this winter. The Ohio Department of Transportation has adopted the phrase "Ice and Snow, Take it Slow." By reducing your speed, altering your route, and following the tips outlined above, you can increase your chances of having a safe winter driving season.

Further information can be obtained from your local law enforcement agency or on the internet. The Ohio Department of Transportation's website is: www.dot.state.oh.us.

This article has been brought to you by the Wayne/Holmes Emergency Coalition. If you would like to submit questions or make topic suggestions, please go to our website at www.whec.org.