

Winter Auto Preparedness and Safety

Several years ago, the nation was riveted by the plight of a young couple from Idaho that were stranded in the snow. Their experience serves as a warning that winter storms can hit suddenly and severely. Staying safe in the car is a necessity, since 70% of all winter deaths occur in cars.

However, winter traveling can be safe and event-free if a few simple precautions are taken. Preparing your car for the winter can be as easy as adding a few supplies and taking a few necessary steps.

In addition to your emergency car kit, the following items are recommended to store in your car during the winter:

- Tire chains
- Basic tool set including jumper cables, flat fix, duct tape or electrical tape, an adjustable Crescent wrench, Philips and flat head screwdrivers, and pliers
- Fold up shovel and windshield scraper
- Tow rope
- Sand or kitty litter to place under tires for traction in the snow
- Extra gas in proper container
- Compass and road maps
- Cell phone and charger for emergencies (Some disconnected cell phones may still be able to dial 9-1-1 when charged)
- Extra blankets, clothing (preferably wool, not cotton), shoes and sleeping bag
- First aid kit and manual
- Knife and multipurpose pliers
- Extra hand and body warmers
- **MOST IMPORTANT: TAKE YOUR AMATEUR RADIO AND A REPEATER DIRECTORY FOR THE AREA OF TRAVEL**

During the wintertime it is important to drive safely. The roads and highways can become dangerous if precautions are not taken in every instance.

Here are some driving tips for staying safe during the wintertime:

- Maintain a full tank of gas in your car in case you get stuck or need to use your heater to stay warm
- Don't let cold temperatures tempt you into starting your car in a closed garage. Carbon monoxide can be fatal when breathed in a confined area
- Slow down on bridges and overpasses which freeze first. Avoid sudden changes of speed or direction as you drive over them
- Look out for other danger zones while driving, like intersections, hills, and curves. Reduce speed and watch for other drivers that may be skidding
- Keep windows free of snow and ice
- Keep your speed steady--avoid sudden stops or accelerations
- Use brakes cautiously. Abrupt stopping can cause brakes to lock up, causing you to lose control of your steering
- Practice slow-speed maneuvers in a snow or ice covered parking lot; also practice hard braking and steering in skidding situations

- Read your car's owner manual carefully for information on its equipment and handling characteristics
- Add weight to the bed of a truck to improve traction (they are prone to rear wheel skids)
- If you get stuck in the snow, straighten the wheels and accelerate slowly. Avoid spinning the tires, and use sand or gravel under the wheels
- If you get stuck in a storm and help is not visible, don't leave your car. Poor visibility and freezing temperatures can be fatal.

By taking these types of precautions, you can prevent winter disasters and keep your family safe and warm on the road.