



# Loss Control Insights

## 12 Safety Tips for Winter Driving

### **#1 BE PREPARED**

You must be ready for whatever you may encounter. Yes, this is common sense. But how many of us jump in our vehicle when the weather looks nice and end up in a storm? Carrying a few items in your vehicle can prepare you in the event of an emergency.

- Proper clothing (loose layers of clothing, extra gloves, rain gear)
- A flashlight in the glove box
- A blanket, food and water
- Cell phone and charger (Don't talk or text while driving)
- A bag of sand or salt and extra windshield washer fluid
- A windshield scraper
- Jumper cables
- Have at least a half tank of gas at all times during the winter
- Plan long trips carefully—what weather conditions may you encounter?

### **#2 COMPLETE A PRE-TRIP INSPECTION**

Professional drivers are required to inspect their vehicles before every trip. Do a visual, hands-on inspection and check all important items, including tires, wiper blades and fluid and lights. Checking your personal vehicle often is critical particularly during the winter months and before long trips. Be sure to have a mechanic check it at the beginning of winter. Don't forget to check your spare tire regularly.

### **#3 SLOW DOWN**

Many accidents occur because drivers are going too fast for road conditions. A slower speed gives you more time to react if something occurs. Extra patience and care for other drivers can help a lot.

### **#4 GIVE YOURSELF EXTRA SPACE**

Allow for more room between yourself and other vehicles. You should always have enough space and time to move out of harm's way. Try to maintain a minimum space cushion of 2 car lengths for every 10 mph of traveling speed. Increase this distance as road conditions worsen.

### **#5 HOLD YOUR STEERING WHEEL FIRMLY**

Hitting snow that has been pushed to the roadside can quickly pull your vehicle off the roadway. Additionally sharp maneuvers, heavy wind or ice can quickly cause you to lose control of your vehicle. Keep your vehicle steady by maintaining a firm grip on the steering wheel.

### **#6 BRAKE AND ACCELERATE LIGHTLY**

Try not to do anything forcefully in bad weather. Feather the controls. When you need to slow down quickly in slippery conditions, try lightly pumping your brakes. This reduces your chance of locking your tires and spinning out of control. If your vehicle has an anti-locking braking system (ABS), you

should press and hold the brake down as far as possible in an emergency. The ABS prevents the wheels from locking, enabling you to steer around obstacles.

### **#7 WATCH FOR BLACK ICE**

Black ice is a dangerous road condition. It is a thin layer of transparent ice that forms when the temperature is close to freezing and sometimes makes the road look slightly wet. It is difficult to spot, so when the temperature gets close to freezing, look for the following clues:

- Ice build-up on my mirror arms, antenna or the top corners of my windshield
- The spray from tires on vehicles around you stops

### **#8 USE EXTRA CAUTION WHEN APPROACHING BRIDGES**

Elevated structures, such as bridges and highway overpasses usually freeze first, and many are not treated with ice-/snow-melt materials (salt, sand) like the rest of the road. Vehicles traveling fine on the highway could spin out of control as they hit black ice on a bridge.

### **#9 MOUNTAIN DRIVING CAN BE HAZARDOUS**

Mountain weather can be severe in winter and can change rapidly. Be ready for wind gusts and watch and/or listen for emergency vehicles and snowplows, particular near blind curves. Watch for changing road conditions as the elevation changes.

### **#10 OBEY ALL ROAD SIGNS**

A simple, yet effective tip. Safety authorities post these warnings for a reason. Many drivers get into trouble just by ignoring a sign.

### **#11 IF STRANDED - STAY IN YOUR VEHICLE**

If you get stuck in a bad storm or blizzard and you can't see a close place to seek assistance, stay put! It's easy to get confused in a bad storm, and you may get lost. This is a time to use those supplies mentioned in tip #1. You should also keep moving to stay warm. To avoid carbon monoxide poisoning, keep the exhaust pipe clear of snow, and open a downwind window slightly for ventilation. Run your engine for only 10 minutes each hour.

### **#12 IF CONDITIONS LOOK BAD GET OFF THE ROAD**

Don't push your luck. Use your best judgment. Listen to weather reports and warnings and react appropriately. This tip can help you avoid having to use tip #11.

