

# Winter driving tips

## Is your vehicle ready for winter driving?

Proper maintenance for your automobile is always important, but this especially is true during the winter.

- Check your coolant. Make sure the coolant level is correct and that it is mixed according to the manufacturer's specifications.
- Use a lighter weight engine oil, like 10W40 for easier starts.
- Add dry gas to fuel to prevent the fuel line from freezing.
- Don't let your gas tank drop below a quarter of a tank.
- Keep your washer fluid tank filled (store extra fluid in your trunk) and be sure the fluid is mixed with an antifreeze agent.
- Inspect your wiper blades to make sure they are working properly.
- Have your battery tested. Keep in mind it is not working at its peak in cold weather and can run down a battery quite quickly.
- Make sure tire pressure (including spare) is the same as manufacturer's recommendations and that the tread is not worn.

## How can I make my car ready each time I drive?

Clear your entire vehicle of ice and snow before you drive. This includes all the windows, roof, hood and trunk. Debris that comes off your vehicle while driving can be hazardous to other drivers. In many states it is illegal to drive your vehicle without fully cleaning it. Warm up your car before you drive. Do not start a completely defrosted car in a poorly ventilated space to avoid carbon monoxide buildup. Turn on headlights and fog lights. Turn on defrosters and clear windows with snow.

## What should I do if my car breaks down?

If you are stranded in a winter storm, stay in your car. Turn on your low beams, which provide better illumination in snow than high beams. If you are driving during a winter storm, turn on your low beams, which provide better illumination in snow than high beams.

- Do not use cruise control on slick, icy or wet roads.
- Slow down. Posted speed limits are set for ideal driving conditions.
- Go easy on starts, turns and stops.

- Don't brake too hard or stop too abruptly. Apply the brakes by applying brakes and ease off the pedal slightly. Press down firmly again until you stop. Applying pressure is better than pumping the brakes. If your car has ABS, the process is different. Do not pump the brakes and do not let up. Four-wheel drive vehicles can be safer in slippery conditions, but they don't stop any faster than other cars.
- Anticipate potential danger such as icy bridges or drifting snow. Remember, bridges tend to freeze before the roads do.
- Leave more room between your car and other vehicles on the road.
- If you go into a skid, do not panic. Ease off the accelerator and don't lock up the brakes. Steer in the direction you want the car to go and then straighten the wheel when you feel the car grabbing or moving in the desired direction.

## What should I do if my car breaks down?

Because of the cold, winter breakdowns can be deadly, especially when traveling in remote areas. Consider carrying extra-warm clothes, blankets or a sleeping bag, matches and a two-way radio or cell phone (even an old cell phone without a plan can be used to dial 911). A flashlight or other form of signal light is always recommended. Carrying food and water also is a good idea.



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