



# Michigan NETS Winter Driving Safety Tips



Winter driving season has arrived. It's amazing how many motorists have forgotten their winter driving skills during the short summer months. The fact is many crashes occur when motorists do not anticipate the road surface conditions.

Many people get into trouble by assuming the roads will not be slippery unless the temperature is freezing or below. Ice can form on road surfaces any time the air temperature drops to 40° degrees or less and especially in windy conditions. Bridges and underpasses can be especially hazardous, as the ability of moisture to dissipate from the roadway is different, along with varying surface angles. Low or shaded areas and areas surrounded by landscaping can also contribute too less than ideal road condition issues.

Intersections are also areas that although appear to be clear or only slightly wet are often ice-covered and slippery. This is caused by moisture emitting from the exhaust of cars waiting at the intersection, which then quickly freezes on the pavement. It is also recommended that motorists allow no less than a car-length in front of their vehicle when stopped behind other vehicles at intersections. They should also watch their rear-view mirrors for cars approaching too fast from behind. Often this extra margin of safety will allow drivers to pull forward in the event that an approaching vehicle begins to slide.

## DRIVING TIPS

If you do find yourself beginning to slide on snow or ice, DON'T PANIC.

- Take your foot off the gas and DO NOT hit the brakes.
- Steer the front of your vehicle into the skid (the same direction you are sliding).
- This technique is used in both front- and rear-wheel drive vehicles.
- If you must use the brakes, in ABS-equipped vehicles, use a firm, steady pressure WITHOUT pumping.
- If your car is not equipped with ABS, gently pump the brake pedal without locking up the brakes



Four-wheel-drive enthusiasts are reminded that although a four-wheel drive vehicle provides some additional traction in non-ideal weather conditions, drivers of these vehicles should take the same precautions as if they were driving in a non-four-wheel vehicle.

## VEHICLE MAINTENANCE

Just as important as good driving skills, however, is preventative vehicle maintenance. Motorists need to make sure their vehicle is in good mechanical condition as weather conditions can cause unwanted vehicle issues.

- Make sure antifreeze is at the proper level
- Install new wiper blades and fill the washer reservoir
- Keep an extra bottle of washer solvent in the vehicle
- Make sure your battery terminals are clean and if the battery is more than three year's old, have it tested by a qualified technician
- Check your tire treads, or have a qualified technician at a tire dealer check them.



## **EMERGENCY SUPPLIES**

Unexpected events can and do happen. By having an emergency kit prepared ahead of time and in your vehicle, you can increase your chances of arriving at your destination safely. Items in your emergency kit should include but are not limited to:

- Warm clothing, boots, stocking cap, gloves or mittens
- Flashlight with fresh batteries and flares
- Small shovel, sand or kitty litter
- Blankets
- Fresh first-aid supplies
- Drinking water, candy bars or other nutritious snacks
- Small candles and matches to light them with. A single lit candle can provide warmth for four hours.
- A charged cell phone or other communication device



Frozen car locks can also be a real safety issue. Carefully heating the end of a key with a match or a lighter will work most of the time. A squirt of de-icer spray that you can purchase at most gas stations and store it in your glove box is another quick method.

## **Other basic safety tips for winter driving include:**

- Allow extra time to arrive at your destination.
- Slow down and be alert for other vehicles around you.
- Allow extra space between you and other vehicles.
- Always wear your safety belt and ensure others in your vehicle are properly restrained.
- If you drink, do so responsibly and always hand the keys over to a designated driver. Even one drink can impair your driving.
- During inclement weather, make sure to let others know your route of travel, and expected arrival time.
- Cell phones are a great safety insurance against breakdowns and getting stranded.
- Stay alert and on longer trips ensure you take needed breaks.
- Watch for road signs, landmarks and construction zones.
- Never start a vehicle in a closed garage or idle your engine with the windows closed. Carbon monoxide, which is present in exhaust fumes, is almost impossible to detect and can be fatal.

