

# WINTER DRIVING SAFETY TIPS



## DON'T BLAME THE WEATHER! DRIVE SLOW ON ICE & SNOW

Most winter driving crashes are not caused by the weather, but by drivers' failure to adjust to road conditions. "Drive slow on ice & snow" is the theme for our winter driving safety program, and our #1 tip for staying safe on wintry roads. Here's why:

- ❄ Most winter driving crashes can be attributed to drivers going too fast for the roadway conditions. When this happens, drivers can lose control, leave their lane, or even leave the roadway.
- ❄ On snowy and/or icy roads, it can take up to **ten times longer** to stop your vehicle. Slowing down and allowing more room between your vehicle and the one ahead of you gives you more time to react and brake, thus reducing your crash risk.
- ❄ Michigan speed limit laws require drivers to move at a speed that is "reasonable and proper" for the road conditions. This means that even if you are driving at or under the posted speed limit, you could still get a speeding ticket if the road conditions make that speed unreasonable for safe driving.
- ❄ By making adjustments in speed and handling when road conditions are bad, you can take charge of your winter driving safety.
- ❄ Don't use cruise control on ice and snow. If your car skids, the cruise control will accelerate to maintain a constant speed — spinning your wheels even faster and increasing the chance you will lose control of your vehicle.



## BE PREPARED

Before you go, take the time to prepare your car for safe winter driving.

- \* Keep your car well maintained. Have a mechanic check fluid levels (oil, wiper fluid, antifreeze, etc.), as well as your battery, ignition system, lights, brakes, heater/defroster, wipers and tires.
- \* Remove all snow and ice from your vehicle, especially from all windows, the windshield, mirrors, headlights and taillights. Snow and ice can dim the beams of lights and reduce visibility.
- \* Always keep your gas tank at least half full to avoid fuel line freeze-up.
- \* Check both current and forecasted weather conditions along your route.
- \* Stock your car with winter driving supplies:
  - *Auto Emergency Kit*
  - Flashlight with extra batteries
  - Shovel
  - Snow brush and scraper
  - Booster cables
  - Bag of sand or kitty litter for traction under tires
  - Cell phone charger
  - Bottled water, food, necessary medicine



## FOLLOW THESE WINTER TIRE SAFETY TIPS

**Winter tires** are made of a softer rubber compound than summer or all-season tires, with thin cuts in the tread. This gives them a better grip on the road, which makes them **the safest choice for driving in winter**. In fact, winter tires can help you stop up to 50% faster on snowy or icy roads.

- \* **Regularly check your tire pressure in winter.** Tire pressure drops as temperatures do, so it's important to make sure your tires are adequately inflated.
- \* **Use the penny test to check tire treads.** Insert a penny, Lincoln's head down, into the tread of your tire. If you can see Abe's entire head, there's not enough tread left to drive safely. (Tires should have at least 1/8" of tread for safe driving.)
- \* **Get tires rotated every 5,000 to 8,000 miles** to help them wear more evenly.



## KEEP PEDESTRIANS & PASSENGERS SAFE

Drivers aren't the only ones at greater risk in winter weather.

- ❄ Stopping distances can be up to 10 times greater on ice and snow, so drive slowly and stay alert for pedestrians, especially at intersections and crosswalks.
- ❄ Be aware that pedestrians can be obscured by snowbanks, or can be difficult to see in low-light winter weather.
- ❄ Don't shovel or plow snow into sidewalks. This can force pedestrians to walk in the road.
- ❄ Make sure you and all your passengers wear their seat belts. In 2017 alone, seat belts saved an estimated 14,955 lives in the U.S. and could have saved an additional 2,549 people — if they had buckled up.
- ❄ The lap and shoulder belt should be snug across the hips and chest. Never put the shoulder belt behind your back.
- ❄ Children should be buckled into car seats or booster seats until they are at least 4' 9" tall. Even when they are big enough to use the adult seat belt, they should ride in the back seat until they are 13 years of age or older.

For car seat guidelines, visit <https://www.nhtsa.gov/equipment/car-seats-and-boosters>

- ❄ Don't dress infants or toddlers in puffy coats or snowsuits. The extra bulk keeps the harness straps from fitting tight enough against baby's chest. Dress your little one in lighter layers to keep the straps snug, then cover them with a blanket or coat.





## DRIVE SAFELY NEAR SNOWPLOWS

When sharing the road with a snowplow, here are ways to stay safe.

- ❄ Be aware that snowplows move slowly, make wide turns, and stop frequently.
- ❄ It's illegal in Michigan to pass a snowplow on the right. And while it's not illegal to pass on the left, you should do so with extreme caution.
- ❄ If you are driving behind a snowplow, maintain 6 to 10 car lengths between your vehicle and the snowplow. If you follow too closely, the driver may not be able to see you. Your vision could also be obstructed by a "snow cloud" created by the plow.
- ❄ A snowplow is considered an authorized vehicle for purposes of Michigan's Move Over law. If you see a stationary snowplow on the side of the road, you **must reduce your speed** to at least 10 mph slower than the speed limit and move over to an open lane. If this is not possible, slow down and pass, allowing as much room as possible.



## KNOW HOW TO HANDLE EMERGENCIES

Despite all your precautions, you find yourself stopped or stalled on the road. Don't panic. Follow these safety rules:

- ❄ Stay with your car and don't overexert yourself.
- ❄ Put bright markers on the antenna or windows and keep the interior dome light turned on.
- ❄ If you must run your car's engine to keep warm, be certain the exhaust pipe is clear of snow, ice or dirt, and check it periodically. Run the vehicle for only 5-10 minutes each hour and be sure to open the windows slightly for ventilation. Keeping the car running continuously could lead to asphyxiation from carbon monoxide poisoning.

