

Winter Driving Safety

Winter can be a dangerous time of the year for drivers. Most winter weather related deaths occur in motor vehicle accidents. In fact, across the U.S., the average icy road fatality count is nearly 4 times the total number of deaths from **all** other weather hazards **combined**.

Icy road conditions may only be present a handful of times during a winter yet they produce numerous accidents in short amounts of time. According to statistics, the fewer road icing events that occur in an area, the greater the rate of fatalities per event. It appears that people need practice driving on snow and ice.

In winter, visibility can be reduced to near zero by wintry precipitation and/or fog. Falling snow or freezing rain can make it hard for windshield wipers and defrosters to clear windows, and vehicle lights can be coated with snow, slush or ice which reduces their effectiveness.

In winter, day length is reduced significantly and much more commuting time is done in darkness or near darkness. Clear your car of snow and ice before you drive. Make sure all windows, headlights, tail lights and mirrors are clear. Turn on your headlights while driving in rain or snow.

When driving, if roads are snow covered or icy, slow down and drive carefully. Vehicle stopping distances are increased 2-6 times on snow and ice. Keep extra distance between you and other vehicles. Allow extra time to get to your destination.

As a motorist, you are far more likely to have an accident when driving during an icy road condition than an equivalent amount of time driving during rainy or dry weather. If possible, avoid travel during winter storms. If you have the option to work from home, snowy or icy days are good days to do so.

Be alert for rapidly changing road conditions. Blowing snow, lake effect snow bands, snow squalls and black ice can cause rapidly deteriorating road conditions.

Blowing snow is wind driven snow that reduces visibility. Blowing snow may be falling snow and or snow on the ground picked up by the wind. Blowing snow may produce icy patches on otherwise dry roads.

Lake effect snows often occur in the late autumn and winter downwind of the great lakes when cold arctic air sweeps across the relatively warm waters of the lakes. Snow bands will typically form over and along the lee shores of the lakes and move downwind. These bands can result in locally heavy snow with reduced visibilities and icy roads.

Snow squalls are brief intense snow showers accompanied by strong gusty winds. Similar to summertime thunderstorms, snow squalls often happen on mostly fair days. In a matter of minutes, a pleasant winter day with sunny skies can change to whiteout conditions. They often produce instantaneous snow accumulation and blinding visibility. Snow squalls are responsible for many vehicle pile ups on interstate highways.

Black ice is a thin film of ice on roads or sidewalks which is difficult to see or looks wet, but is actually very slippery and dangerous to drive and walk on. Black ice forms at night when radiational cooling refreezes water on roads or sidewalks, and can form when air temperatures are above freezing if skies clear and the ground is cold or frozen.

We hope this winter driving information will help you prepare for and stay safe while driving this winter. Remember to scan your surroundings, make enough space for others and anticipate danger to stay safe on the road.

ICE & SNOW, TAKE IT SLOW

Each year in the U.S., there are over
1,000 deaths and **100,000 injuries** due to
vehicle crashes during winter weather.

DID YOU
KNOW?



Clean off your vehicle before driving.
Flying snow from cars causes accidents.



Keep it slow, and don't use cruise control.
Roads can be slick even if they just look wet.



Leave extra distance between vehicles.
Stay especially far from snow plows.

weather.gov

