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## Snowstorm Driving

Snow can provide a knockout punch to your car and test your driving skills. It decreases visibility, increases the slickness of roads and comes with temperatures unfriendly to both you and your car. With some preparation beforehand and good driving practices, it is possible to navigate through the worst conditions safely.

Prior to winter weather, have a mechanic thoroughly inspect your vehicle. Attention should be paid to the state of your antifreeze and oil levels, your heater, brake system, defroster, and your electrical and exhaust systems. Also, make sure your tires are in good condition, checking the air pressure and treads. With your equipment fully functional, the risk of you breaking down or getting in an accident is reduced.

Before driving in winter weather, stock up your car with products to keep you safe. Use the following list as a guide:

- Warm blankets
- Jumper cables
- Small shovel
- Small bag of sand or cat litter for traction
- High energy snack foods and bottled water
- Flashlight and extra batteries
- Medications and first aid kit
- Newspapers for additional insulation
- Extra hats, mittens and scarves
- Plastic bags for sanitation
- Warning devices; flares or triangles

Reduce the risk of getting stranded by keeping at least half a tank of gas in your car at all times. An ice scraper and brush should be present throughout the snow season, too; you'll need it to clean off your vehicle before you start driving and if you get stuck. If you have a cell phone, don't get into your car without it; it is your link to help.

Knowing the conditions and being prepared is your best defense against snow hazards. Check the road and weather reports prior to departure, and plan your route accordingly. If at all possible, don't travel alone or opt for public transportation during foul weather. You'll want to wear loose-fitting layers for warmth and ease of movement. Take the time to clear snow off your vehicle and thoroughly warm the engine before setting out. This improves your visibility and prepares your engine for harsh conditions.


Once on the road, your driving techniques and awareness can keep you safe. Set your speed according to visibility, road conditions and volume of traffic. It is always a good idea to steering smoothly, accelerate gradually and brake gently. You'll retain traction and avoid skidding. It takes twice as long to brake on slippery surfaces, so keep extra distance between you and other vehicles. Notice how other cars are handling the road and modify your driving accordingly. The behavior of other vehicles can alert you to slick spots or decreased visibility. Most importantly, always wear your seatbelt. If the unexpected occurs, it can save your life.

Driving in snowstorms is difficult but not impossible. Facing harsh conditions safely is a matter of having a functional,

well-stocked vehicle and an alert driver. A little preparation beforehand, and accepting, rather than fighting, the elements will get you to your destination in one piece.

-- *Catie Hayes*

**Related Links:**

- [AAA -- Driving and Snow](#) 
- [FEMA: Driving in the Winter](#) 