

PREPARING YOURSELF AND YOUR VEHICLE FOR WINTER DRIVING

Driving in ice and snow – sometimes in limited visibility – increases the challenge immensely. The following winter tips will help you navigate more safely when the going gets dicey, and will show you how to prepare your vehicle in advance to help avoid an extreme weather breakdown.

Maintenance & Preparation Tips

Keep The Tank Half Full

To avoid a fuel line freeze up that could strand you at the worst time – in frigid cold – always keep your gas tank at least half-full in the winter.

Fill Up On Antifreeze

Your vehicle's antifreeze level should be checked annually to ensure it's ready to withstand winter's cold. A mixture of coolant and water will protect against freezing - check your vehicle's manual for manufacturer recommendations.

Check Wipers And Washer Fluid

Blades work hard in the winter under tough circumstances. So before winter, replace wiper blades if they do not clear the windshield in a single swipe without streaking. Where appropriate, consider the use of special winter blades that offer improved performance in snow and ice conditions. Always fill the windshield washer reservoir with all-weather fluid to prevent freeze up. And since windshields can quickly get too dirty to see through in winter slush and mud, keep extra fluid in the trunk.

Maintain Safe Tire Pressure

Cold weather reduces tire inflation pressure. Be sure to maintain the manufacturer's recommended tire pressure for your vehicle, which can be found on the driver's door jamb. Do not reduce tire pressure in an attempt to increase traction on snow or ice. It does not work, and when the roads dry out, it can cause vehicle handling problems and excessive wear and tear on tires.

Make Sure Your Battery Is Ready

If your battery is out of warranty, it's advisable to have it tested before cold weather hits. If replacement is necessary, have a certified technician help select the proper battery for your vehicle type and local climate. On any battery, look for a secure fit and clean away any corrosion on the battery and its cable connections.

Check Belts And Hoses

In the fall, it's a good idea to check – and replace as needed – any accessory drive belts that are cracked, glazed or frayed, as well as coolant hoses that are visibly worn, brittle, bulging or excessively soft. It's also smart to check for leaks around hose clamps and at the radiator and water pump.

Pack A Small Snow Shovel

Snow shovels designed to pack neatly in your vehicle are widely available, and along with sand or ice melt, are prudent to have onboard.

Consider A Pre-Winter Check Up

For optimum safety and peace of mind, have a certified technician perform a winter preparation check that includes the vehicle's fluid levels, lights, brakes, exhaust system and heater/defroster. While there, you can also have the regular vehicle manufacturer recommended services, including oil and filter changes, performed.

Driving Tips

Maintain Momentum

Gaining traction on slippery surfaces when your vehicle is stopped is difficult, so it's important to try and keep your vehicle moving at all times (when possible) on snow and ice. Also, before climbing a snow-covered hill or incline, generate some forward momentum on a flatter portion of the road to help you reach the top.

Managing A Skid

If your vehicle begins skidding on a slippery road, don't hit the brakes. Instead, take your foot off the brake and steer into the skid until you regain some grip at the front wheels. Once grip is restored, gently steer in the direction you want to go.

Be Vigilant About Black Ice

During frigid weather, watch for patches of black ice, which often forms on bridges, overpasses, and in shady areas. If you hit black ice, remain calm and gently lift your foot off the accelerator while trying to keep the steering wheel straight. Should the rear of your vehicle slide left or right, gently turn the steering wheel in the same direction.

Bridge Decks Freeze First

Because the undersides of bridges are exposed to the cold air underneath them, the condition of their surfaces can be worse than the roadways approaching them.

Go Slow On Exit Ramps

During the winter, entry and exit ramps may have received less anti-icing material than the main roads. Be aware of this and slow down when exiting the highway.

Avoid 4x4 Overconfidence

A four-wheel drive vehicle may help you get going quicker, but it won't help you stop any quicker. Being overconfident in your 4x4 vehicle's traction can be very dangerous. Also remember that many 4x4 vehicles are heavier than passenger vehicles and may take longer to stop.

Stay Put If Stranded

If you become stranded by snow during your travels, stay in your vehicle. In addition to providing a temporary shelter, it makes it easier for rescuers to locate you. Pack a brightly colored cloth to tie to the antenna, or to place at the top of a rolled up window to signal an emergency. For longer winter road trips, it's smart to take some food, water, and a warm blanket just in case.

Slow Down!

This is the simplest and perhaps the most important thing of all.

Remember, Progressive Roadside Assistance is available 24/7/365.

Simply call 1-800-776-2778 and a roadside service professional will be dispatched to help you with:

- Towing anywhere within a 15 mile radius or to the nearest qualified repair facility if one is not located within 15 miles
- Flat Tire Assistance
- A jump-start
- Fuel Delivery as covered under your policy limits – you'll only be responsible for the cost of fuel
- Locksmith Service if your key has been lost or stolen or locked inside your vehicle