

Winter, Your Car, and You

Driving in the winter means snow, sleet, and ice that can lead to slower traffic, hazardous road conditions, hot tempers and unforeseen dangers. To help you make it safely through winter, here are some suggestions from the National Safety Council to make sure that you and your vehicle are prepared.

Weather

At any temperature—20 degrees Fahrenheit below zero or 90 degrees Fahrenheit above—weather affects road and driving conditions and can pose serious problems. It is important to listen to forecasts on radio, TV, cable weather channel, or forecasts in the daily papers.

Your Car

Prepare your car for winter. Start with a checkup that includes:

- Checking the ignition, brakes, wiring, hoses and fan belts.
- Changing and adjusting the spark plugs.
- Checking the air, fuel and emission filters, and the PCV valve.
- Inspecting the distributor.
- Checking the battery.
- Checking the tires for air, sidewall wear and tread depth.
- Checking antifreeze level and the freeze line.



Your car should have a tune-up (check the owner's manual for the recommended interval) to ensure better gas mileage, quicker starts and faster response on pick-up and passing power.

Necessary Equipment

An emergency situation on the road can arise at any time and you must be prepared. Following the tune-up, a full tank of gas, and fresh anti-freeze, your trunk should carry:

- A properly inflated spare tire, wheel wrench and tripod-type jack
- A shovel
- Jumper cables
- Tow and tire chains
- A bag of salt or cat litter
- Tool kit



Essential Supplies

Be prepared with a "survival kit" that should always remain in the car. Replenish after use. Essential supplies include:

- Working flashlight and extra batteries
- Reflective triangles and brightly-colored cloth
- Compass
- First aid kit
- Exterior windshield cleaner
- Ice scraper and snow brush
- Wooden stick matches in a waterproof container
- Scissors and string/cord

Non-perishable, high energy foods like unsalted canned nuts, dried fruits, and hard candy

In addition, if you are driving long distances under cold, snowy, and icy conditions, you should also carry supplies to keep you warm, such as heavy woolen mittens, socks, a cap, and blankets.

If You Become Stranded

Do not leave your car unless you know exactly where you are, how far it is to possible help, and are certain you will improve your situation.

To attract attention, light two flares and place one at each end of the car a safe distance away. Hang a brightly colored cloth from your antenna.



If you are sure the car's exhaust pipe is not blocked, run the engine and heater for about 10 minutes every hour or so depending upon the amount of gas in the tank.

To protect yourself from frostbite and hypothermia use the woolen items and blankets to keep warm.

Keep at least one window open slightly. Heavy snow and ice can seal a car shut.

Eat a hard candy to keep your mouth moist.

Tips for Safer Sledding and Tobogganing

Sliding downhill is an exhilarating winter sport. People of all ages can participate, and use all kinds of containers, from large toboggans to plastic disks or even cardboard boxes. But sledding unintentional injuries are surprisingly common despite snow's cushioning effect. Estimates of the number of injuries treated in hospital emergency rooms every year show about 33,000 sledding injuries and 1,500 from tobogganing.

Sledding injuries often include facial lacerations or skull fractures. Tobogganing injuries almost always involve the lower half of the body.

Children ages 5 to 9 are most susceptible to injury. Parents of young children should not let them sled alone. Older children should be taught to check for hazards.

The National Safety Council offers these guidelines for safe and fun sledding and tobogganing:

Keep all equipment in good condition. Broken parts, sharp edges, cracks and split wood invite injuries.

Dress warmly enough for conditions.

Sled on spacious, gently sloping hills which have a level run-off at the end so that the sled can come to a halt safely. Avoid steep slopes and slopes located near streets and roadways.

Check slopes for bare spots, holes and other obstructions which might cause injury. Bypass these areas or wait until conditions are better.

Make sure the sledding path does not cross traffic and is free from hazards such as large trees, fences, rocks or telephone poles.



Do not sled on or around frozen lakes, streams or ponds because the ice may be unstable.

The proper position for sledding is to sit or lay on your back on the top of the sled, with your feet pointing downhill. Sledding head first increases the risk of head injury and should be avoided.

Sledders should wear thick gloves or mittens and protective boots to protect against frostbite as well as potential injury.

