

# Winter Driving — Be Prepared

## Emergency Car Kit . . .

### What to Pack

- **Jumper cables** to restart engine
- **Cat litter or sand** for tire traction on snow and ice
- **Shovel** to scrape snow away from tires
- **Ice scraper** to clear windshield
- **Warm clothes** — gloves, a hat, sturdy boots, warm jacket and even a change of clothes
- **Blankets** to keep warm inside the vehicle
- **Flashlights and extra batteries** for increased visibility
- **First-aid kit** — also pack necessary medications in case you are stuck on the road
- **Food** — pack items containing protein such as nuts and energy bars, also canned fruit and a portable can opener are good additions
- **Water** — bring enough for each person in your car and any pets
- **AM/FM radio** to listen to traffic reports and emergency messages



### Prepare Your Vehicle

You should keep your vehicle in top operating condition all year round for safety and fuel economy. It is especially important to prepare for winter driving by performing the following safety steps:

- Know your vehicle. Read your Owner's Manual and winterize the following:
  - battery and lights
  - defroster and heater
  - motor oil
  - wiper blades and windshield washer fluid
  - antifreeze
  - belts, hoses and filters

- tire pressure
- brakes and brake fluid
- Keep your gas tank full to minimize condensation, and provide an extra margin of comfort and safety in case of delays.
- A CB radio or cellular phone can be a lifesaver for you or another stranded motorist in the event of an emergency or collision.
- Stock your car with basic safety equipment such as emergency cash, scraper and brush, small shovel, jumper cables, tow chain, and bag of sand or cat litter for tire traction.
- Carry a breakdown kit that includes road flares, blanket, gloves, boots, warm clothing, flashlight, extra batteries, food, water, and first-aid kit.
- Clear snow and ice from all windows and lights — even the hood and roof — before driving.
- Know current road conditions:
- Call 511 for traveler information.
- View weather and traffic information at [www.wsdot.wa.gov/traffic](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/traffic)
- Check local news for weather and traffic reports.
- Watch electronic highway signs for information.

## **On the Road**

Winter road conditions require your extra attention. Staying off the phone, driving at a safe and legal speed, driving alert and sober and buckling up will ensure that you safely make it to your destination.

- Drive with your headlights on.
- Slow Down! Give yourself extra time to reach your destination when roads are slick. If at all possible, do not drive when the roads are icy. Consider delaying your trip.
- Leave room for maintenance vehicles and plows — stay at least 15 car lengths (200 feet) back and don't pass on the right.
- Watch for icy surfaces on bridges, even when the rest of the road seems to be in good condition.
- Look farther ahead in traffic. Actions by other drivers will alert

you to problems and give you extra seconds to react.

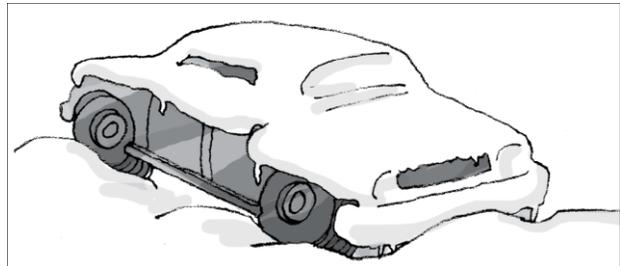
- Trucks take longer to stop, so don't cut in front of them.
- Don't use your cruise control or overdrive when it's freezing (or colder).
- Don't get overconfident with four wheel drive. It helps you get going quicker but won't help you stop any faster.
- Don't pump anti-lock brakes. The right way is to "stomp and steer."

### **On the Radio 530 or 1610 AM**

If traveling over the mountains, it is a good idea to program a button on your radio for these stations. Local radio and television stations provide motorists with specific road conditions. Electronic highway message signs alert drivers of upcoming road conditions. Highway advisory radio signs tell motorists to "tune in" (530 or 1610 AM) for important traffic advisories.

### **Know your Tire and Chain Options**

Road and weather conditions vary throughout Washington. Because different types of winter tires perform best under different road conditions, your local tire dealer can help you select the best option. Approved passenger car traction tires have at least an



eighth of an inch of tread and are labeled "Mud and Snow," "M+S," "All Season," or have a "Mountain/Snowflake" symbol. These tires can be used year-round. Studded tires are approved traction tires. In Washington, studded tires are legal for use between November 1 through April 1.

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*For more information on winter travel*

*from WSDOT, go to <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/winter.htm>*