




Adventist Risk Management, Inc.



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Caught in a Storm

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Driving in winter weather and snowy conditions demands extra care and slower speeds. Accumulated snow along the sides of the road can become a hindrance to clearly see road conditions ahead. Road conditions will be slippery when powdery snow turns into slick ice during sub-zero temperatures. Here are a few guidelines to better prepare you for driving this winter.

PREPARING YOUR AUTOMOBILE AND YOURSELF

1. Have your automobile serviced just before the winter season and make sure your mechanic is thorough.
2. Keep a bottle of winter windshield cleaner in your trunk. You will need to clean your windshield often in snowy conditions.
3. Ensure that all vehicle lights are in working order and keep them clean. A lighted automobile can be seen better by oncoming traffic.
4. Tires should have a good tread and be inflated according to the manufacturer's recommendation. If driving in heavy snow areas, consider installing chains on your wheels to keep the traction.
5. Keep a tool kit in your car with basic tools and supplies such as: a flashlight, rope, knife, spare batteries, jumpstart cables, a shovel, and mobile phone and GPS unit charging cables.
6. Keep a blanket in your car just in case you're stranded. If you are going on a long journey, pack a stock of food, bottled water, emergency medicine kits, a pillow, coat, boots, and gloves,
7. Try to keep your gasoline tank at least half full at all times.

If you are organizing travel for an event with your church group, it is advisable to have each participant inform his/her family of the entire plan and keep the family updated frequently. For group events, adult drivers experienced with driving in winter weather should be scheduled to drive on a rotational basis, depending on the length and time of travel. Leaders could also outline hospitals on the travel route in case of any emergencies that may occur.

SAFE DRIVING IN WINTER CONDITIONS

Staying safe on the road during the winter goes beyond preparation. After you have fully prepared yourself and your vehicle, it is advisable to follow these tips once you are out on the road.

1. Continue to check weather conditions.
2. If you are stuck in a snowstorm, stay in your vehicle to avoid dangerous conditions outside.
3. Call for help. Do not try to walk in a storm. You may lose sight of your car in the blowing snow and become disoriented.
4. Tie a bright colored ribbon or cloth to your antenna to alert passersby that you are in distress and to make it easier to find your car for the arriving assistance.
5. Ensure that your exhaust pipe is not clogged with ice, mud, or snow. A blocked exhaust pipe can cause carbon monoxide gas to leak into the passenger compartment of the car when your engine is running.
6. Accelerate and decelerate slowly. Applying gas slowly to accelerate is the best method for regaining traction and avoiding skids. Remember, it takes longer to slow down on icy roads.
7. Don't power up on hills. Your vehicle will start spinning on roads with snow or ice. If you are driving a stick shift, it is always advisable to start in the low gear. Avoid using cruise control when driving on snow, ice, or even rain. If your car hydroplanes or skids, the car can accelerate and spin the wheels attempting to maintain a constant speed.
8. Rotate drivers if you are getting tired or sleepy.

If you can avoid leaving your home during wintry conditions, stay home. Even if you can drive well in the snow, not everyone can. If you must leave the house, be patient with the drivers around you and know that it is going to take longer to arrive at your destination. Always have an emergency plan in place and keep your family informed of your plans. It is always best to exercise caution when driving in such unpredictable and dangerous conditions.

References

¹www.nhtsa.gov

²www.weather.com

³<http://exchange.aaa.com/safety>

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