



MaineDOT Flash Facts

General Winter Storm Safe Driving Tips

- Check WGME 13 regularly for cancellations and road condition information.
- Driving during and after a winter storm is very dangerous, no matter how roads are treated or plowed. Reduce speed and increase the following distance between you and the vehicle ahead.
- Watch out for pedestrians walking in the street; kids sliding on snow banks; and road and driveway plow operators.
- Keep your windshield washer dispenser filled and use it to keep your windshield clear. Make sure the wipers work well.
- Bridge decks, ramp surfaces and shady areas often freeze sooner than adjacent pavement, so pay special attention in these areas.
- Reduce speed on downhill road sections by shifting into a lower gear. When using your brakes, apply them gently.
- During winter storms, do not use cruise control. De-activating cruise control requires a tap of the brakes, and you want to avoid unnecessary braking when road conditions are slippery. (You also do not want unnecessary power to the wheels when roads are slippery.)
- Leave plenty of room for plows and maintenance vehicles:
- Plows may need to stop or change lane position if a disabled vehicle is ahead.
- Oncoming plows will be clearing the centerline, so move a safe distance to your right.
- Visibility near a plow will often be reduced due to blowing snow.
- Road conditions ahead of plows often will be worse than behind them, so drive carefully, maintain a safe following distance, and resist the urge to pass.
- Leave early, reduce your speed and expect delays--it's better to be late than it is to hurry and end up off the road, or worse. (Leaving a little earlier or later may make a huge difference in road conditions. On longer trips, listen to local radio weather reports regularly.)
- Do not drive in white-out conditions. Pull off the road to a safe location (not the shoulder) until conditions improve.
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- Four wheel drive provides no additional safety for braking or turning. A slushy surface can lead to hydroplaning. (Don't let 4 wheel drive make you overconfident. On slick ice, any vehicle will have severely reduced traction.)
- Do not use cruise control – you want to be able to apply power only when needed.
- Use brakes carefully, applying them early and gently.
- Turn on your headlights so you can see and be seen. When wipers are on, the headlights must be on too-It's the law!
- Keep a cold-weather emergency kit in your vehicle:

Shovel	Brightly colored cloth for emergency flagging
Windshield scraper and broom	Cell phone and emergency phone numbers
Extra windshield washer fluid	Extra boots, gloves, socks and warm hat
Tire chains or traction mats	Rain or waterproof gear
Healthy snacks and water	Sand or kitty litter
First aid kit	Salt
Blankets	Map-to help direct rescuers to your location
Flashlight and extra batteries	
Basic tool kit	
Good spare tire and jack	
Flares or reflectors	
Battery booster cables	

- Maintain at least a half tank of gas (Provides added vehicle weight and emergency fuel supply if you become stuck). Keep a can of dry gas handy.
- You can avoid many winter driving dangers with the right preparation and safe practices.
 - √ If your vehicle is snow or ice covered, take the time to clean it completely. Leaving snow on the hood, roof or trunk can cause problems for the traffic behind you or could slide and block your visibility. Use the defrosters to help remove ice and snow.
 - √ Clean your headlights and taillights. Headlights will need regular cleaning in the colder months.
 - √ If you see a slippery spot ahead, brake before reaching it.
 - √ Gently check your brakes when on uncertain road surface conditions. (When doing this, make sure you are on a straight road section and that no other traffic is close by.)
 - √ Leave plenty of room between you and the vehicle ahead. (At least a 4 second gap if roads are slick.)
 - √ If road conditions are hazardous, ask yourself if the trip is really necessary.



- √ When traveling uphill on a slippery road, maintain a steady safe speed. (Slowing down too much or stopping may cause you to lose momentum.)
- √ At intersections, edge out slowly if snow banks obscure your vision.

- Posted speed limits are for ideal travel conditions, so go at slower speeds when roads are wet and temperatures are at or below freezing.
- Be especially careful on curves. Reduce your speed before entering the curve.
- If you do feel a loss of traction:
 - Take your foot off the accelerator
 - Release the clutch (manual transmission) or shift into neutral (automatic) until control is regained.
 - Steer your car in the direction you want the front wheels to go. Steer gently and smoothly.
- If your car gets stuck in snow or ice:
 - Don't spin the tires, it makes the surface slicker, and harder to get the car out.
 - Place sand, salt or kitty litter around the drive wheels to improve traction.
 - Shovel a wheel path for all wheels and remove high snow from under the car.
 - If you become stranded, stay in your vehicle unless help is clearly in sight.

- √ Turn on the car's engine for ten minutes each hour and run the heater. (Keep lights and all other electrical equipment off to preserve the battery)
- √ Be careful of carbon monoxide poisoning. Keep exhaust area free of snow. Crack open a window that is upwind from the exhaust.
- √ Do not over exert yourself shoveling, pushing or with other unaccustomed exercise. Cold weather already puts an additional strain on the heart.

- Avoid making sudden changes
- Avoid making sudden changes (an abrupt turn, brake or acceleration on a slippery road can quickly cause loss of control).
- Avoid passing.

If your wheels lock, briefly ease off the brakes, then re-apply them to maintain vehicle control. If you have ABS brakes, maintain constant pressure on the brake pedal.

Test the road surface by lightly tapping your brakes, but only if no other vehicles are nearby.

Tires with good tread and proper pressure (do not under-inflate) are important in bad weather driving.



However on ice, traction is extremely difficult, so keeping the vehicle under control is your major defense.

Handling a skid:

Ease off the accelerator and do not brake (If you have ABS brakes, maintain constant pressure on the brake pedal)

- If the rear of the vehicle is skidding right - steer smoothly to the right.
- If the rear of the vehicle is skidding left - steer smoothly to the left.

Be careful not to over-steer!

Additional adjustments may be needed, and if so, follow the skid right/ steer right or skid left/ steer left steps.

If you find yourself in a skid, try to keep an eye on the nearby traffic activity and your surroundings. Look in the direction you want to go (hand-eye reaction does work).

Be A Road Model: Slow down, be cautious and use your seat belt.