

WINTER DRIVING



Whenever possible, avoid driving in a winter storm. If you must go out, it is safer to travel in the day. The [Colorado Department of Transportation \(link is external\)](#) website has road conditions, traffic cameras, alerts and restrictions throughout Colorado. Call 511 from your cell phone for statewide conditions or 303-639-1111 for nationwide conditions.

GENERAL WINTER DRIVING TIPS:

- Avoid traveling alone, but if you do so, let someone know your destination, route and when you expect to arrive.
- Dress warmly. Wear loose-fitting, lightweight clothing in layers.
- Listen to the radio or call the state highway patrol for the latest road conditions.
- Use major streets or highways for travel whenever possible; these roadways will be cleared first.
- Drive slowly. Posted speed limits are for ideal weather conditions. Vehicles take longer to stop on snow and ice than on dry pavement.
- Four-wheel drive vehicles may make it easier to drive on snow-covered roads, but they do not stop quicker than other vehicles.
- If you skid, steer in the direction you want the car to go and straighten the wheel when the car moves in the desired direction.
- Know your vehicle's braking system. Vehicles with anti-lock brakes require a different braking technique than vehicles without antilock brakes in icy or snowy conditions.
- Try to keep your vehicle's gas tank as full as possible.
- Travel during daylight hours.

Winterize your car: Before winter sets in, have a mechanic check the following items on your vehicle:

- Battery
- Antifreeze
- Windshield wipers and washer fluid
- Ignition system
- Thermostat
- Lights (head lamps and hazard lights)
- Exhaust system, heater, brakes, defroster
- Oil level (if necessary, replace oil with a winter oil or SAE 10w/30 variety)
- Install good winter tires that have adequate tread. All-weather radials are usually adequate for most winter conditions. However, some jurisdictions require vehicles to be equipped with chains or snow tires with studs.

Vehicle Emergency Kit: Regardless of the season, it's a good idea to prepare for an in-car emergency. Assemble an emergency supply kit for your vehicle, and consider adding the following items for winter conditions:

- Shovel & Windshield scraper
- Flashlight & Extra batteries

- Battery powered radio
- Water & Snack food
- Matches
- Extra hats, socks and mittens, rain gear and extra clothes
- First aid kit with pocket knife
- Necessary medications
- Blanket(s)
- Tow chain or rope
- Working jack and lug wrench, spare tire
- Small tools (pliers, wrench, screwdriver)
- Road salt and sand
- Booster cables
- Emergency flares or reflective triangles
- Fluorescent distress flag
- Plastic bags (for sanitation)

Driving Maneuvers:

Stopping on snow and ice without skidding requires extra time and distance. If you have anti-lock brakes, press the pedal down firmly and hold it. If you don't have anti-lock brakes, gently pump the pedal. Either way, give yourself plenty of room to stop. Never slam on the brakes.

Remember, even if you drive an SUV with four-wheel drive, you may not be able to stop any faster, or maintain control any better, once you lose traction. Four-wheel drive may get you going faster, but it won't help you stop sooner.

- When you're driving on snow, accelerate gradually.
- When you're driving on snow, ice or wet roads, avoid abrupt steering maneuvers.
- When you're driving on snow, ice or wet roads, merge slowly, since sudden movements can cause your vehicle to slide.
- Look farther ahead in traffic than you normally do. Actions by other vehicles will alert you to problems more quickly, and give you that split-second of extra time to react safely.

If you become trapped or stranded in a vehicle:

- Try to move the vehicle to the side of the road if possible.
- Turn on hazard lights and hang a distress flag from the radio antenna or window.
- Remain in your vehicle where rescuers are most likely to find you. Do not try to walk to safety unless help is visible within 100 yards. You could become disoriented in blowing snow.
- Run the engine and heater about 10 minutes each hour to keep warm.
- Protect yourself from possible carbon monoxide poisoning by opening a downwind window slightly while your vehicle is running. Periodically clear snow from the exhaust pipe.
- Exercise to maintain body heat, but avoid overexertion.
- Huddle with passengers and use your coat, blanket, road maps, seat covers, and floor mats for warmth.
- Take turns sleeping. One person should be awake at all times to look for rescue crews.
- Drink fluids to avoid dehydration.
- Conserve car battery power by balancing the use of lights, heat, and radio with supply.
- Call attention by tying a brightly colored cloth to the antenna and raise the hood to alert rescuers. Turn on vehicle light at night.
- Keep one window slightly open to let in fresh air. Use a window that is opposite the direction the wind is blowing.