

## Winter Driving & Travel Safety

Could You And Your Passengers Survive Being Stranded In A Severe Winter Storm?

Every year we hear about the plight of motorists caught on the road during a severe blizzard or storm. The results can be traumatic and/or fatal unless you are prepared.

**Make sure you check with local authorities such as local Forest Service Offices about local conditions and road conditions BEFORE you set out on your trip! Most Forest Service roads of Mt. Hood National Forest are covered with deep snow and are not maintained, and are impassable during the winter.**

**Also check current and forecast weather conditions before beginning your trip.**

Many people are unaware of the hazards of winter travel. Harsh conditions of wind, cold, snow, or whiteout can turn an outing into a tragedy. Knowledge of the area, weather, route and the limitations of your body equipment, and vehicle or snowmobile plus a little common sense can ensure a safe and enjoyable trip.

Listed below is some winter driving safety tips you should consider now, before going on a winter excursion.

### Personal & Vehicle Preparation

Layers of clothing which can be adjusted to prevailing conditions are best. A good-quality rain gear is excellent. Avoid tight fitting clothes and boots that may restrict circulation. Take extra socks and gloves or mittens, warm cap, matches in a waterproof container, fire-starter, nylon cord, general purpose knife, high-energy food, plastic tarp, space blanket, signal mirror, first aid kit, wide tape for repairs and metal container for melting snow.

Snowmobilers should be certain to have wrench pliers, extra sparkplugs and drive belt, and a spare ignition key. Experienced snowmobilers always carry snowshoes (in case of machine failure), as well as the normal emergency and survival gear for winter.

**Although not an all-inclusive list, consider the following when preparing your vehicle for winter travel:**

**BATTERY AND ELECTRICAL SYSTEM:** A battery that's 100-percent efficient at 80 degrees will be only 64-percent efficient at 30 degrees, and only 33-percent efficient at 10 degrees.

**FUEL AND IGNITION SYSTEMS:** How long has it been since your vehicle had a tune-up? Periodic tune-ups can find those items that should be replaced to prevent failure in cold weather. Also, check the entire exhaust system for leaks.

**COOLING SYSTEM:** Be sure that the system is clean, that you have adequate antifreeze protection, and that all hoses and belts are in good condition. Antifreeze should be replaced every two years.

**OIL:** Clean oil of the correct weight, or viscosity, is important to cold weather starting.

**TIRES:** Tire tread condition is crucial when driving on ice and snow. A minimum of 5/32" of tread is necessary to provide good traction. Also check inflation. Tire pressure decreases one pound for every 10 degree drop in temperature. Radial "all-weather" tires are recommended. Studded snow tires provide better traction on snow, while chains are best for stopping and starting in severe snow and ice conditions.

**WINDSHIELD WIPERS AND LIGHTS:** Keep plenty of windshield-washer antifreeze solution in the reservoir.

**WINTER SURVIVAL KIT:** Another precaution is to create a winter survival kit. Use a container for safe and handy storage in summertime, and when fall arrives, place in trunk of vehicle.

## Basic Safety Tips

### What to Take:

- A winter first aid kit.
- Matches and a fire starter in a waterproof container.
- Extra food and water.
- Extra clothing, including wool or synthetic sweater, gloves and a rain shell.
- Plastic whistle.
- Map and compass.
- Flashlight with extra batteries and bulb.
- Emergency reflective rescue blanket.
- Pocket knife.
- Avalanche cord or transceiver when in avalanche country.

### What to Know:

- How to stay calm in an emergency.
- How to do basic maintenance and adjustments of your equipment particularly snowmobiles.
- When to use good judgment to avoid risks and hazards.
- Where you are at all times.

### Although not all-inclusive, also consider the following items when packing for your trip:

- Blankets, sleeping bags, or something to keep you warm;
- Extra stocking caps, mittens, and extra outer clothing for passengers;
- Matches, candles, 2 cans of sterno (portable heating fuel for cooking + heat);
- Two three-pound coffee cans, or the like one for excrement and the other to hold candle or sterno;
- Food supply (high-calorie, nonperishable food such as canned nuts, dried fruit, "Trail mix");
- Liquids (place in thermos to avoid freezing);
- Paper towels;
- Small sack of sand or kitty litter for traction;
- Tire chains (correct size!);
- Small plastic tarp or blue foam ground cover for putting on tire chains;
- Shovel (small collapsible type or small snow shovel);
- Windshield scraper brush for snow removal;
- Portable radio with extra batteries;
- Lock de-icer;
- Windshield cover (help avoid .scraping windshield, easier snow removal);
- Extra windshield washer antifreeze solution.
- Map(s) of area you will be traveling.

**THINGS TO KEEP IN THE CAR YEAR ROUND:** Battery jumper cables, flashlight with extra batteries. Tools: screwdrivers, wrenches, pliers, wire, duct tape, socket set, tow chain, First Aid kit with pocket knife, flares/reflective triangles, spare fuses, headlight and taillight bulbs, an extra quart of motor oil, fire extinguisher, cotton work gloves, shop towel, distress flag or help sign.

## **Leave Word**

Before you leave, notify a responsible person of:

- Your planned route of travel. Mark it on a map for them.
- Your planned departure time.
- Your planned time of return-be sure to check back in.

When someone is overdue, keep calm. Notify the County Sheriff or District Ranger in the trip area. Either the county Sheriff or District Ranger will then take steps to alert or activate the local search and rescue organization. If the missing person returns later, be sure you advise the Sheriff or Ranger.

## **Don't Get Lost**

Avoid getting lost by:

- Taking a good map
- Learning to read it and knowing how to locate your position
- Learning to read a compass and believing it
- Checking weather forecasts and avoiding storms
- It is easy to become disoriented in whiteouts and when physically exhausted.

## **Share the Country**

The National Forest is vast, but in some areas those traveling by skis, snowshoes, and snowmobiles must share the same routes and areas. Common sense and courtesy will provide a safe and pleasant experience for everyone. The following suggestions are for your benefit.

- Snowmobiles should operate at minimum speed near skiers or snowshoers. Do not accelerate until well beyond those on foot.
- Skiers and snowshoers should yield the track to oncoming or overtaking snowmobilers, unless the track is wide enough for safe passage.
- Snowmobiles are not permitted on developed ski areas. Ski touring and snowshoeing may be restricted or regulated. Check with the local Ranger or ski area manager.

## **Nutrition**

A good rule is "lightweight but loaded," meaning loaded with calories. Plan your meals to ensure a balanced diet of high-energy foods. Take along plenty of snacks.

Water is often difficult to find in winter. All that is available may be what you take or can melt. Replacement of fluid is very important for maintaining physical condition.

## **Sanitation**

Pack out what you carry in. Take food in easily compressed packages, such as foil, that requires little space in your gear.

Avoid leaving human waste near any water source. If you are in a group, avoid concentrating wastes. Nature can assimilate only small quantities at a time. Bury solid waste 6 inches underground.

## **Winter Recreation Code of Ethics**

1. I will respect the rights of all winter recreationists to enjoy the beauty of the winter wonderland. I will respect public and private property.
2. I will park considerately, taking no more space than needed, without blocking other vehicles and without impeding access to trails.
3. I will keep to the right when meeting another winter recreationist. I will yield the right-of-way to traffic moving downhill.
4. I will slow down and use caution when approaching or overtaking another.
5. I will respect designated areas, trail-use signs, and established ski tracks.
6. When stopping, I will not block the trail.
7. I will not disturb wildlife. I will avoid areas posted for the protection of feeding wildlife.
8. I will pack out everything I packed in and will not litter.
9. I realize that my destination objective and travel speed should be determined by my equipment, ability, the terrain, weather and the traffic on the trail. In case of emergency, I will volunteer assistance.
10. I will not interfere with or harass others. I recognize that people judge all skiers or snowmobilers by my actions.