

The weather outside is frightful. . .but we still have to go out in it!

Oh Christmas Tree, Oh Christmas Tree, How Beautiful are your Branches. . .



We wish all of you a happy holiday season and a prosperous, safe, New Year!

As Mother Nature brings typical winter weather to our area, this means that snow and ice are not far behind. The number of accidents increase by 12% this time of year so preparing your vehicle for the winter and knowing how to react in severe conditions can save you a lot of trouble and possible injury.

Be prepared *before* a storm hits:

- Have a **mechanic** check your car's battery, brakes, fluid levels (antifreeze, windshield washer fluid and oil), as well as the heating and exhaust systems to ensure that your car is in good, safe working condition.
- Try to keep your **gas tank full** during the winter months. Don't allow the gas to go below half a tank. Not only will this prevent damage from freezing, you'll avoid running out of gas if you're stuck in a traffic jam during the dead of winter.
- Install **snow tires** or all-weather radials with adequate treads.
- An adequate supply of **windshield washing liquid** is critical to wash away the mud and melted snow that can severely limit visibility.
- **Prepare for an emergency.** Keep blankets, flares, a sack of sand for traction, shovel, windshield scraper and brush, tool kit, towrope, booster cables and a flashlight with extra batteries in your trunk. You should also stock your car with material for survival, such as waterproof matches to melt snow for drinking water, a first aid kit, dry clothing and a brightly colored cloth (to tie to the antenna).

When driving under adverse winter conditions:

- **Take care pulling out of streets** blocked by mountains of snow. It's often difficult to see who or what is coming.
- Back your car into the driveway so you have **better vision** when pulling out.
- Be aware of **joggers** on the street. Often sidewalks are impassable and die-hard joggers venture onto the street for a clearer path. Unfortunately, they may not see icy spots or other hazards hidden below the slush.
- When waiting to make a left-hand turn, keep wheels pointed straight ahead. If wheels are turned to the left in anticipation of making the turn and you're rear-ended, your car will be pushed into the path of oncoming traffic, which could result in a head-on collision.
- If your car **does not have anti-lock brakes** and you start skidding on the ice, try not to slam on your brakes. Gently pump your brakes to maintain better control and prevent your wheels from locking.
- If your car *does* have **anti-lock brakes**, *slam* on your brakes when skidding on the ice. Pumping your brakes prevents the anti-lock system from taking over.

If you must travel during a severe storm:

- **Don't travel alone.** Notify someone of your estimated time of arrival as well as your primary and alternate travel routes.
- If stuck, **stay in the car and wait for help.** Run the engine and heater sparingly. Also make sure your exhaust pipe is clear of snow and ventilate your car so that carbon monoxide fumes won't poison you.
- **Keep your energy.** Eat food that provides the body with energy for producing its own heat. Replenish your body with fluids to prevent dehydration. Don't eat snow; it will lower your body temperature. Melt it first.

The Christmas Season not only brings gifts and time with family and friends, it also is a time for decorating the house and the Christmas Tree. If you are one of the many folks that still enjoy decorating a "real" tree, take a minute and watch the following video on the importance of proper care for your tree—it may save you from becoming one of our fire statistics!

http://fire.nist.gov/tree_fire.htm

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