

Even though Texas is known more for hot temperatures than cold, winter brings severe weather that can make roadways hazardous and unpredictable. Our tips can help employers and employees when staying off roads in extreme weather is not an option.

Tips for Safe Winter Driving



- *Winterize vehicles before you get on the road.* Have a mechanic check the battery, antifreeze, wipers, windshield washer fluid, ignition system, thermostat, headlights, hazard lights, exhaust system, heater, brakes, defroster, tire pressure and tread, and oil level. If necessary, replace existing oil with the manufacturer's recommended type and grade of winter oil. Keep your gas tank full.
- *Plan ahead.* Choose the safest routes and times of day, and allow plenty of time for travel. Drivers should exercise patience, because trip times increase in winter weather.
- *Check area weather conditions before traveling.* For information on road conditions in Texas, contact the Texas Department of Transportation at (800) 452-9292 or at www.txdot.gov. For weather information, visit the National Weather Service at www.weather.gov.
- *Buckle up.* Drivers and passengers should always wear seat belts, especially when children are passengers.
- *Use caution when driving on bridges and overpasses.* Elevated roadways, such as bridges, ramps, overpasses, and shaded areas, are the first to freeze in cold weather.
- *Reduce speed and increase following distances.* In winter weather, a vehicle needs three times more space to stop on slick roadways. Visibility may be reduced due to weather conditions.
- *Stay sober-minded.* Consuming alcohol or taking prescription or other drugs can impair a driver's judgment, vision, and reaction time.
- *Stay in the vehicle if you are stranded or stalled.* Drivers should carry a charged cell phone or two-way radio to call for help and notify authorities of their location.
- *Have an emergency kit.* Employers should equip company-owned vehicles with emergency gear, and consider gear for personally owned vehicles that employees use for work. The National Weather Service and www.ready.gov recommend keeping an emergency winter supply kit in your car that may contain:
 - cell phone, charger, and extra battery;
 - battery-operated or hand-crank radio;
 - jumper cables;
 - spare tire;
 - flares;
 - blankets or sleeping bags;
 - flashlight with extra batteries;

- first-aid kit;
- water (1 gallon of water per person per day for at least three days);
- non-perishable food and a manual can opener;
- warm clothing;
- matches;
- sand or cat litter;
- snow shovel and brush;
- windshield scraper and brush;
- basic toolkit (pliers, wrench, screwdriver);
- tow rope;
- compass; and
- road maps.

Winter Weather Alerts

Local National Weather Service offices issue winter weather advisories, watches, and warnings – based on local criteria – for snow, blowing snow, ice, sleet, freezing rain, wind chill, and extreme temperatures.

Outlooks are issued before a winter storm watch when forecasters believe winter storm conditions may develop. It is intended to allow people time to prepare for a weather event.

Advisories are issued when winter weather elements are produced that are not expected to be hazardous enough to meet warning criteria. Be prepared for travel difficulties and use caution when driving.

Watches are issued, usually at least 24 to 36 hours in advance, when conditions are favorable for a significant, hazardous winter weather event. However, an event's occurrence, location, or timing is still uncertain. This scenario can make travel dangerous.

Warnings are issued when significant, hazardous winter weather is occurring or imminent and poses a threat to life or property. Travel will become difficult or impossible, so delay travel until conditions improve. If you must travel, have a winter survival kit with you. If you get stranded, stay with your vehicle and wait for help to arrive.

Visit the National Weather Service glossary at www.weather.gov for more weather definitions.

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